JANUARY 2006

American Cinematographer

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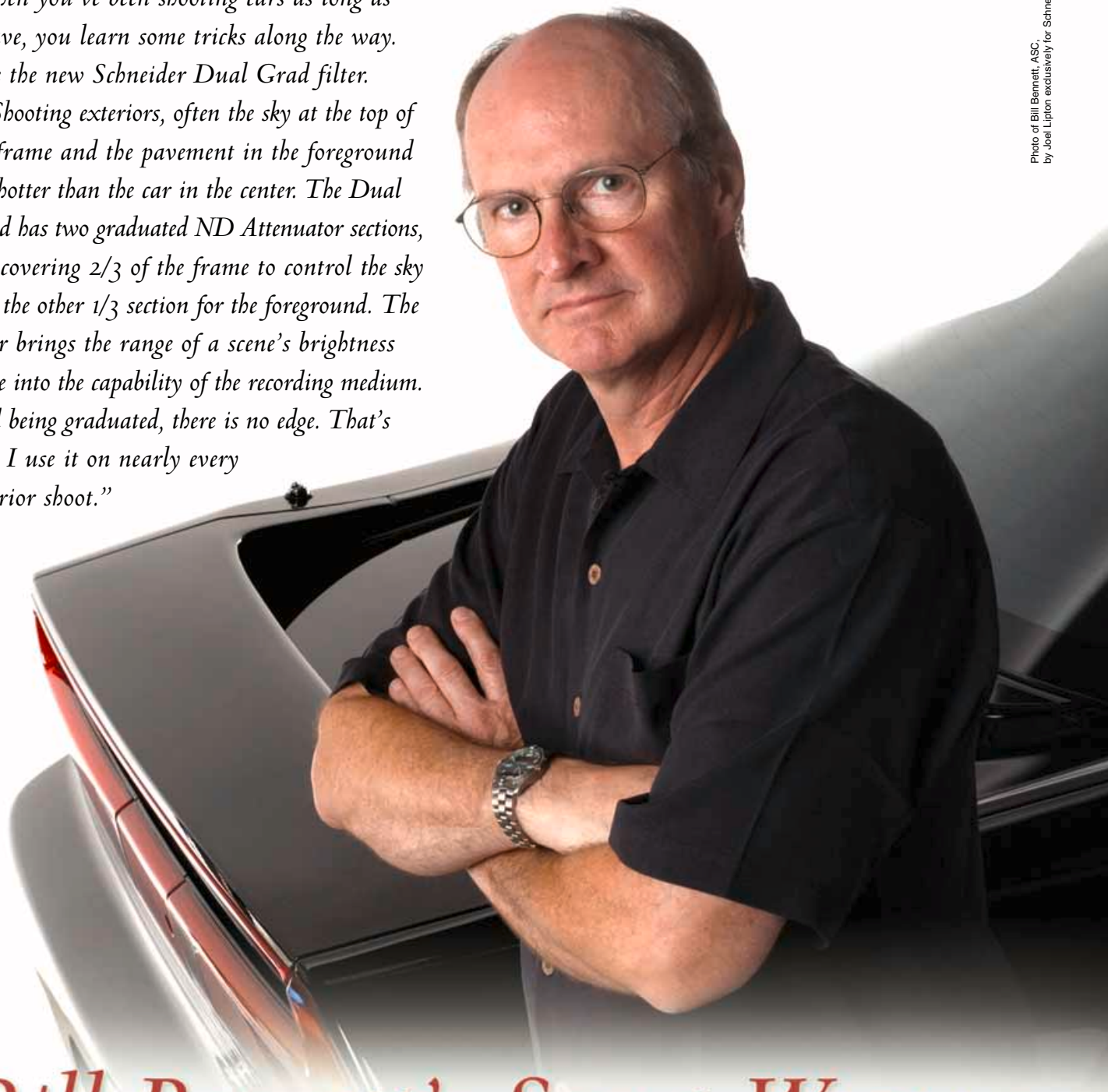


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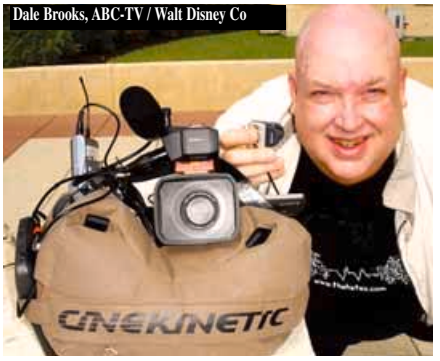
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LEGENDARY AUSTRALIAN EQUIPMENT

Editor's Note



One of cinema's inherent strengths is its ability to transport viewers to different eras and settings. By immersing the audience in a story's environment, movies have the unique advantage of immediacy, allowing us to readily emphathize with the emotional dilemmas of the characters we meet onscreen — *if* the filmmakers have done their jobs well, of course.

This month's spotlighted projects are commendably ambitious in their attempt to put us in their protagonists' shoes, boots, or (in the case of *Memoirs of a Geisha*) *geta*.

Geisha required cinematographer Dion Beebe, ASC, ACS and director Rob Marshall (who clicked together on *Chicago*) to embrace the intricacies of a Japanese subculture defined by its strict adherence to ritual. Adapted from the bestselling novel by Arthur Golden, the movie traces the life of a celebrated geisha from 1930s Kyoto through World War II and beyond. In order to mount this narrative, the filmmakers faced an epic logistical undertaking: recapturing the bygone glories of Kyoto's lavish entertainment district. After touring Japan and steeping themselves in geisha culture, Beebe says, the show's production heads assembled all of their research and "started to piece together a world that doesn't entirely exist anymore." The cinematographer offered a generous account of his methods to Pat Thomson, whose detailed article ("Feminine Mystique," page 36) boasts an impressive scope of its own.

The makers of *The New World* and *Brokeback Mountain,* meanwhile, sought to impart the essence of natural settings. *The New World,* shot by Emmanuel Lubezki, ASC, AMC for director Terrence Malick, transports viewers back to 17th-century Virginia, where English soldier Capt. John Smith (Colin Farrell) encounters Native American princess Pocahontas (Q'Orianka Kilcher). European correspondent Benjamin B interviewed Lubezki, who offered insights into his artful collaboration with the notoriously reclusive Malick ("Uncharted Emotions," page 48). The plot of *Brokeback Mountain,* photographed by Rodrigo Prieto, ASC, AMC for director Ang Lee, begins in 1963 Wyoming, where two cowboys (played by Heather Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal) land a job herding sheep but fall into a passionate relationship that they keep secret for years. Prieto spoke with New York correspondent John Calhoun about using the film's evocative settings to enhance the tale's tragic subtext ("Peaks and Valleys," page 58).

This issue also offers profiles of two cinematographers who will be honored at this year's ASC Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Cinematography in February. Richard H. Kline, ASC (whose credits include *Camelot, The Boston Strangler* and *Star Trek — The Motion Picture*) will receive the Society's Lifetime Achievement Award ("A Legacy Rewarded," page 68), while Woody Omens, ASC (*Coming to America, Harlem Nights*) will bask in the glow of the Presidents Award ("Professor on the Set," page 80). Their accomplishments are highlighted in a pair of enlightening articles penned by David E. Williams.

Stephen Pizzello
Executive Editor

Photo by Douglas Kirkland.

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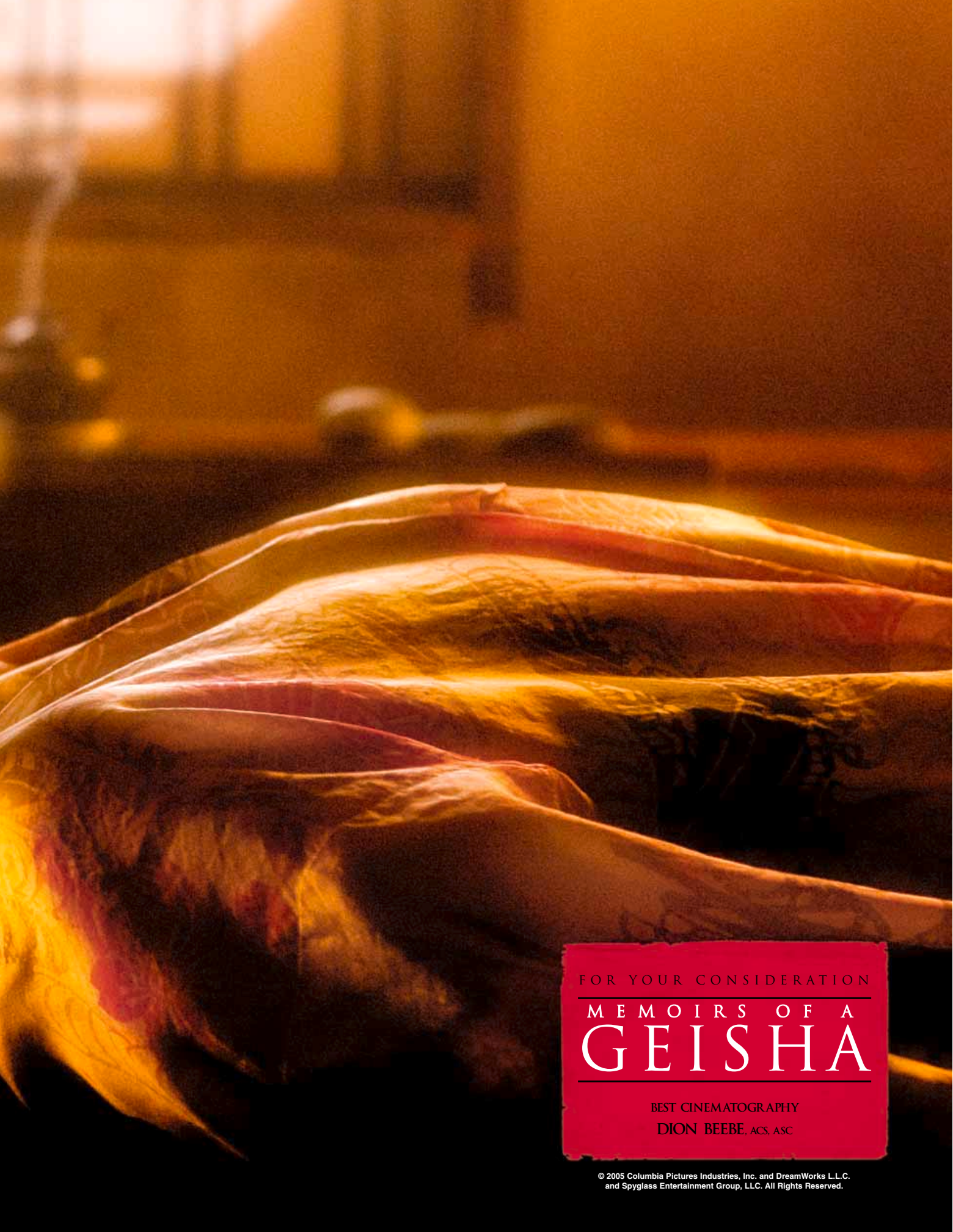
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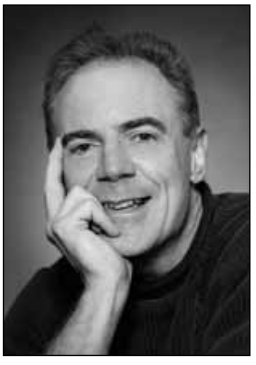
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President's Desk



"With a digital camera, there is no need for lights. The operator merely needs to experiment with the Gain button …."

Biased, uninformed, irresponsible and just plain stupid journalism — we're bombarded with it all the time through every incarnation of what passes for our great nation's mainstream media. As far as our little corner of wheat is concerned, will reporters ever wise up about their characterizations of the relationship between film and digital technology?

I hate to start the New Year by lobbing a grenade, but in this case the target deserves every bit of what's coming, and then some. To wit: an article in the October 15, 2005, issue of *Financial Times,* which till now I've considered a respectable publication. Written by Nicola Christie, the piece is titled "A Defining Moment." I can say with all certitude it is the most ridiculous load of nonsense I have ever read in my life — about *any* subject. And that's quite a statement to make at this juncture.

"Film stock has been replaced by a series of figures that are punched into a camera."

I know what you might be thinking: "Come on, this is trivial. I mean, who cares? We're at war with Islamo-fascist terrorists all over the world, and you get annoyed over something so silly?" These are all valid and sensible reactions, but they fail to acknowledge the significant underpinnings of any dismay. Yes, there are greater issues at hand, and yes, we do our best to maintain perspective. But while living in a world that is not of our making, we approach what we do with *honesty* and *dignity*. When a person-without-résumé steps to the pulpit and transmits noxious lies to a wide audience, whatever the context, the repercussions are negative and far-reaching. Damage is done and people are hurt. In our case, it's not just the perception of our art form that's dragged down, it's the art form itself.

As technology has evolved, the requirements of the cinematographer's job have grown exponentially during prep, principal photography, and in post. So have the ranks of people in the industry who don't really understand our role and intrinsic value to a production. Some of these people are in supervisory positions, and the decisions they make directly affect our work.

"Shooting on high-definition meant Lucas [George] was freed from … the pressure to get the shot right."

Ironically, Christie made the smart move by playing dumb. The article fails to come up with a single new way of misstating and misrepresenting the situation. It's just the same old tripe, this time larded out around the hoariest and most destructive of clichés: whatever is new is better. Beneath its veneer of wide-eyed wonder lies a mocking, provocative and vindictive tone. It's truly a difficult read. The article could not have been any more simple-minded than if the *Financial Times* had recruited a 9-year-old for the job.

Where were the *Financial Times'* editors when all this went down? They are as much at fault as Christie. If they could be so startlingly negligent of their duties, you have to wonder about the veracity of everything they publish.

"…The Coen brothers would rather soak their film negative of O Brother, Where Art Thou? *in chemicals to alter the color and create an old-fashioned look than simulate it digitally."*

(Uh, just for the record, Nicola, the Coens and Roger Deakins, ASC, BSC used the digital-intermediate process to create the movie's look.)

If my indignance seems strong, understand that I'm handed things like this every day. I've also witnessed countless examples of lousy journalism hamstringing the advancement of our craft. Sometimes the correct response is to let the offense pass, but sometimes the gloves have to come off. The ASC's position on new technologies has been well stated many times. And while everyone is free to write what he or she likes, we are also free to respond. To refrain from doing so in this case would merely encourage more of the same behavior. At the same time, we take heart in the fact that our passion and vigilance supersede anything the forces of ignorance can throw at us.

In fact, those attributes are our best and only defense.



Richard P. Crudo, ASC
President

Photo by Douglas Kirkland.

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION



BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY ROGER DEAKINS ASC, BSC



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Global Village

Fateless Puts Koltai in Director's Chair

by John Pavlus



Right: In 1944 Budapest, Gyuri Koves (Marcell Nagy) enjoys a "last supper" with his parents before his father reports to a forced-labor camp. Below: After enduring the horrors of several concentration camps, Gyuri meets a U.S. soldier (Daniel Craig) who encourages him to seek a new path in life.

Call it one of life's ironies: when cinematographer Lajos Koltai, ASC chanced upon the novel *Fateless* while shooting the Oscar-nominated *Malena,* he knew his own fate was sealed. "You may have a hundred times in your life making a film, but [just one where] the material finds you as a director," he says.

Fateless, Imre Kertesz's semi-autobiographical book, tells the tale of a Hungarian boy who, through a series of coincidences, finds himself first a victim and then a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps. The story struck a chord with Koltai, who is Hungarian. He met with Kertesz to express his admiration, and the two hit it off, leading the novelist to ask Koltai to direct the film version of *Fateless*. "Because Imre is perfectly aware of the difference between literature and film, he left the actualization up to me and never interfered with the work," says Koltai.



The production initially planned to hire a British cinematographer because of financing, but Koltai believed he would benefit from the presence of a fellow Hungarian. "When you're directing for the first time, you should have collaborators who speak your language so that they can really understand you, even if you can't find all the words to express what you want," he says. He sought out Gyula Pados, a young Hungarian cinematographer whose work on *Kontroll* (see *AC* April '05) was earning international accolades. "I had to have someone who's kind of an extension of me, and Gyula was," continues Koltai. "Hungarian is so rich for expressing everything in your mind. If there was something I wanted to see, I could just say one word to Gyula, and he understood."

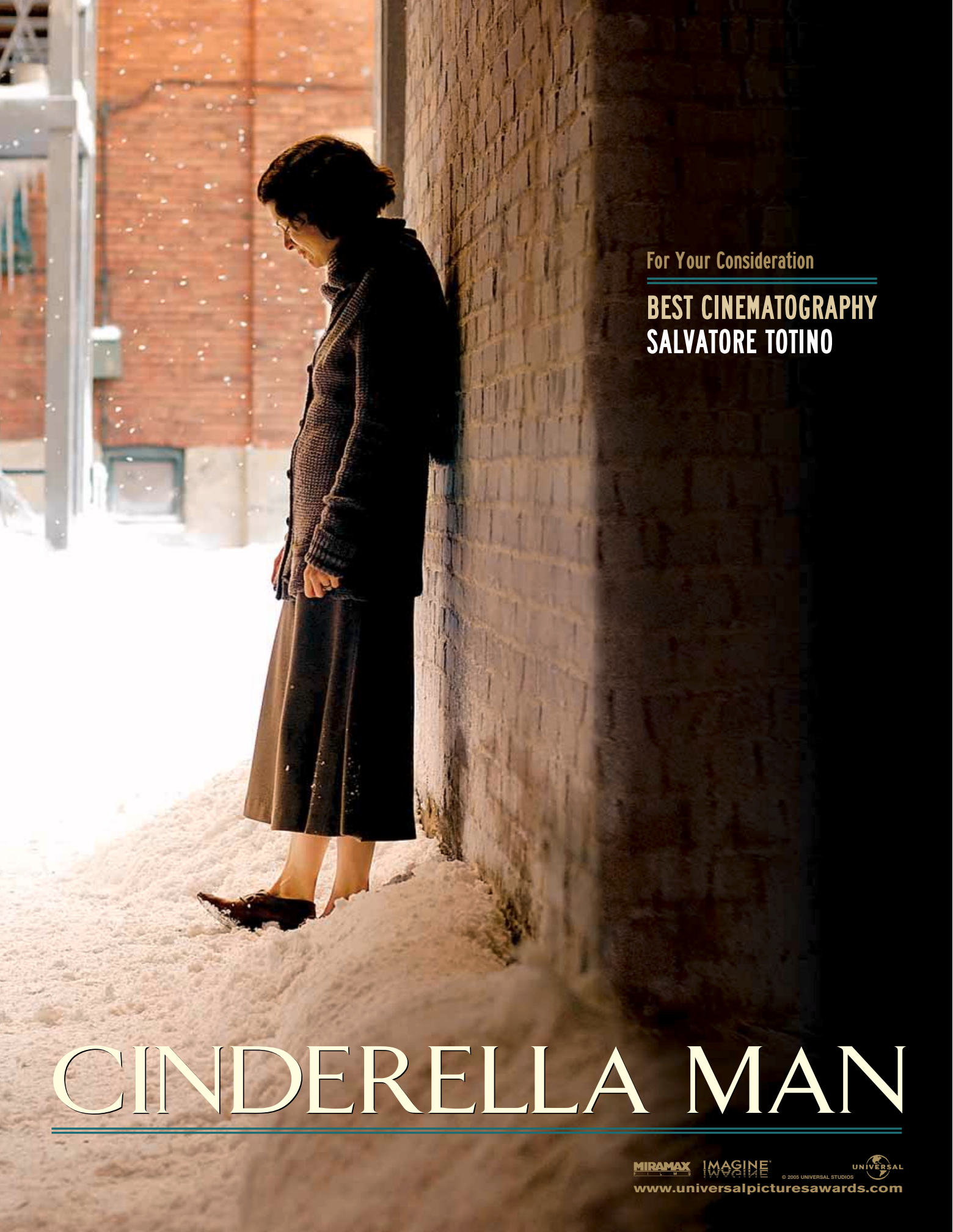
Pados says his initial reservations about filling the shoes of the man he calls "my idol" soon evaporated. "I had heard so many bad stories about cinematographers who became directors, but Lajos was fantastic," he says. "I had absolutely free hands. Sometimes it's difficult with a director who's not that visual or can't translate what's in his mind, but it was easy with Lajos, because he already thinks in pictures." The pair honed their collaboration during a lengthy four-month prep, which Pados says is standard in Hungary. "The second person involved on a project in Hungary is usually the cinematographer," he says. "We start to work [on a film] from the very beginning, sometimes even during the writing."

Koltai designed an elaborate visual conceit for *Fateless:* as the story takes its teenaged protagonist, Gyuri (Marcell Nagy), from a domestic Hungarian idyll to the hell of the death camps, the colors slowly ebb out of the frame until the image becomes almost monochromatic. Koltai believed this approach would create both historical and emotional verisimilitude: "I had to make a picture that was close to the mind's eye. Everybody thinks and talks about the Holocaust in a colorless way because most of us only know about the events from old photos."

To execute this subtle shift, Pados shot *Fateless* unfiltered on Kodak Vision 500T 5279 and Vision 250D 5246 "for a contrasty look," then desaturated the colors in a digital intermediate (DI) at Framestore CFC in London. Rather than pull all the colors down equally, Pados created a subtle scheme in which individual hues die off one by one, until finally the only color left in the camps is a faint trace of skin tone. "The film has a desaturated look at the beginning, but it's got a warm, sepia feel — there are greens and yellows and some faded reds," says Pados. "As the journey progresses, we start to lose the greens, then the yellows, and any strong colors. There's much less color in the costumes, faces and locations as we work toward a colder feeling."

Fateless was Pados' first feature-length DI, and using digital tools in such a

Photos by Kerry Brown, courtesy of ThinkFilm.



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BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY
SALVATORE TOTINO

CINDERELLA MAN

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Above: Camp inmates take cover during an air raid. Below: Director Lajos Koltai (in cap) and cinematographer Gyula Pados prepare a shot of the emaciated Gyuri clinging to life.

sophisticated way presented a steep learning curve; thanks to Koltai's cinematography background, the director was well aware of this. "It was a huge amount of work for Gyula," he says. "I just designed the concept and checked in on him, but he was in that room for 10 to 12 hours a day, every day, for three weeks." Pados says finding the film's look was "really difficult in the beginning," as he and colorist Adam Glasman tried to match the *Fateless* footage to Pados' Photoshop-manipulated test stills. "What's difficult during digital grading is that you see the image on a small monitor," notes Pados. "If you're doing a normal film with normal colors, [the look] can be quite close, but so many times on *Fateless* we lost 70 percent of the color, and it was difficult to make judgments by the monitor. It took us two weeks to find our look, translating it from the monitor to the big screen."



Moreover, Pados didn't simply leach colors out of the images, he also strove to degrade the image quality. Koltai insisted that *Fateless* be shot in anamorphic 2.40:1 — another first for Pados — and the filmmakers used two Panaflex Millenniums and a close-focus Primo lens package. "I loved it," Pados says of his first foray into anamorphic shooting, "but it was also important to me to give the whole film some kind of texture. We were shooting with the best cameras and lenses in the world, but I wanted to somehow get a grittier look." In tandem with the film's gradual loss of color, Pados added grain to the image and sapped the rich blacks with increasing amounts of gray. "In the beginning, the images are pretty nice-looking, and I wanted to destroy [them] as the film progressed, as though we were somehow losing the quality of the film stock and the lenses."

The shifting visual scheme also extended to Pados' lighting style and camera movements. In the film's first act, which was shot on a soundstage, Pados lit characters with multiple soft sources and glossy backlights and covered scenes with a moving camera "to give them more life and energy." That energy bleeds away as the story progresses; static compositions eventually dominate the scenes, and the lighting becomes steadily starker and colder. "Later on [in the film] the lighting is much simpler, with just one source in the window, very little fill and many things falling away into black."



The 300-meter-square set for the camp, built to scale, was "the biggest set I'd ever seen," says Pados. Given the tight shooting schedule, he decided to rig it in prep with a network of high-powered 10K practicals to mimic searchlights. "We had to do 20 shots per night, and the 10Ks gave us a good base light for the whole thing, which saved us lots of money." For daylight scenes, the filmmakers made extensive use of dawn and magic hours. "It was really important to avoid clean, strong sunlight, because that wouldn't have matched the feeling of that part of the story," says Pados.

In one key sequence, a group of prisoners is forced to stand at attention for 24 hours outside their barracks as punishment. As they begin to sag and sway with fatigue, their collective movement takes on an eerie beauty. "They're trembling and swaying and moving all the time, which is a terrible thing, but there's beauty there as well," says Pados, who did his own operating. "The camera is on a crane and always moving. We shot the whole scene backlit by dawn and sunset, and then used a couple of 18Ks to re-create the effect for close-ups after we lost the light."

Pados feels that the film's stately, almost ambivalent visual sensibility sets it apart from other motion pictures about the Holocaust. "Lajos' concept is really different, and it doesn't directly portray explicit suffering. There's only one handheld shot in the whole film, a moment when Gyuri catches a glimpse of stacked corpses as he's being carried over someone's shoulder." Pados shot the scene from Gyuri's point of view, even going so far as to hold the camera upside down. "We wanted to make it abstract — you can't see bodies but can still sort of recognize them. Gyuri fears death, and that's the one moment when he really sees this hell for what it is." ■

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Universal Home Video, $19.95

After the commercial failure of his ambitious musical *One From the Heart*, Francis Ford Coppola decided to get back to basics. He took a crew to Tulsa, Oklahoma, and produced two inexpensive teen films, *The Outsiders* and *Rumble Fish*. Both pictures, which were shot back to back, were based on popular books by S.E. Hinton. Upon their release, they largely were overlooked by critics, but now, more than 20 years later, both films are clearly seminal works in the careers of Coppola and cinematographer Stephen H. Burum, ASC, who photographed the pictures.

Burum had worked with Coppola as a second-unit cinematographer on *Apocalypse Now*, and he also shot *The Escape Artist*, which was produced by Coppola and directed by Caleb Deschanel, ASC. The collaboration between Burum and Coppola really hit its peak with *Rumble Fish*, however; the opportunity to shoot a low-budget picture outside of Hollywood seems to have liberated both men to take one artistic chance after another. *Rumble Fish* is a movie-lover's dream that only gets better with each viewing. Like *Citizen Kane* and *The Conformist*, it's a picture in which nearly every image is visually elegant, thematically expressive and audacious.

Rumble Fish shares the same writer, setting and some of the same actors with *The Outsiders*, but in most ways it is the earlier film's diametric opposite. Whereas *The Outsiders* features vibrant color and dynamic widescreen framing, *Rumble Fish* is a stark black-and-white picture in which the 1.85:1 aspect ratio reflects the less expansive physical and emotional landscape of the troubled characters. And whereas *The Outsiders* is a traditional melodrama — Coppola has referred to it as "*Gone With the Wind* for teenagers" — *Rumble Fish* has more in common with the avant-garde films of Stan Brakhage and Chris Marker than anything made in Hollywood.

Yet the offbeat editing and sound design that characterize *Rumble Fish* enhance rather than detract from the emotional content, which is formidable. Aside from being a potent examination of teen alienation, the movie presents an intimate character study of two brothers (played by Matt Dillon and Mickey Rourke). The complicated relationship between these two young men and their alcoholic father is brilliantly conveyed by Burum's use of short focal lengths and deep-focus compositions, which keep all of the characters in the frame at once. Their spatial relationships reflect their emotions, and the constant visual expressions of the concept of time remind us at every moment that the clock is running out for these doomed youths.

Burum's images look spectacular in this new DVD, which offers a new transfer that flawlessly captures the cinematographer's tonal range — a range that, incidentally, allows the film to veer from tragedy to absurdist comedy to visceral action without ever seeming disjointed or cluttered. The dense visuals find their aural corollary in Richard Beggs' innovative sound design, which has never sounded better than it does on this Dolby Digital 5.1 surround mix.

Coppola supplies an engaging audio commentary, throughout which he makes his love for the picture quite clear. He has often said that *Rumble Fish* is his favorite of the films he directed, and his enthusiasm for the movie and his collaborators is infectious. He entertainingly discusses many facets of the film's production, including performances, lighting and lens choices. If the commentary occasionally comes across as repetitive, it's forgivable, because the repetitions stem from Coppola's overwhelming affection for his cast and crew.

The DVD features two 11-minute featurettes that contain a surprising amount of information, given their short running times. The first is an overview of the film's production for which Burum is interviewed at length. He provides some fascinating insights into his aesthetic approach and describes the advantages of working with black-and-white, such as the ability to paint artificial shadows on the walls to create expressionistic effects. Burum also reveals how the film's few color images were integrated into the monochromatic whole, and there's a terrific explanation of the previsualization strategies he and Coppola employed on the production.

The second featurette explores Stewart Copeland's unusual, percussion-based score. Included are interviews with Copeland and Coppola that provide a concise but detailed study of the philosophy behind the picture's music and sound design. Other supplements include a trailer, a music video, and six scenes that were deleted from the film. The collection of supplements nicely enhances the viewer's appreciation of *Rumble Fish*, a film that is sure to inspire generations of filmmakers for years to come.

— Jim Hemphill



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The Man Who Fell to Earth (1976)
2.35:1 (16x9 Enhanced)
Dolby Digital 2.0
The Criterion Collection, $39.95

Stumbling down a steep incline, loosely covered in a hooded coat, the slim Thomas Jerome Newton (David Bowie) lands in the desert and reveals his unnaturally orange hair. The landscape gives way to development, and Newton finds himself in New Mexico, where he faints in the arms of a concerned hotel chambermaid, Mary Lou (Candy Clark). In New York City, a bookish patent lawyer, Oliver Farnsworth (Buck Henry), meets Newton, a well-heeled entrepreneur who presents a handful of incredibly lucrative patents and then dubs Farnsworth second in command of his new corporation. In Chicago, a capable but bored chemistry professor, Nathan Bryce (Rip Torn), leaves his dead-end job and hopeless womanizing behind to dedicate his talents to the mysterious Newton's multimillion-dollar corporation.

Presented with a provocative, disjointed temporality, the narrative of Nicolas Roeg's unique adaptation of Walter Tevis' 1963 science-fiction novel *The Man Who Fell to Earth* is a richly textured, metaphorically layered picture that continues to beguile audiences. After the picture was dismissed by prominent English critics, the fearful U.S. distributor infamously truncated the film, rearranging scenes and removing nearly 20 minutes of footage. Following a dismal theatrical release in the States, the film gained new life as a cult phenomenon on the midnight circuit of the late 1970s. The Criterion Collection recently issued the movie on DVD, and this edition mirrors Criterion's admirable 1992 laserdisc, which offered Roeg's original cut of the film. This disc marks the third DVD of the picture and is the best overall.

Trained as a cinematographer, Roeg had made a handful of successful films prior to *The Man Who Fell to Earth*, including *Performance, Walkabout* and *Don't Look Now*, and he wanted to push his groundbreaking storytelling methods further with the science-fiction genre. To give *The Man Who Fell to Earth* its poetic visual style, Roeg tapped former collaborator Anthony B. Richmond, ASC, BSC, who had won a BAFTA Award for his eerie work on *Don't Look Now*. Richmond's cinematography on *Man* is a remarkable amalgamation of standard sci-fi genre shots, wide pastoral landscapes, multi-layered surrealistic sequences and dazzling primary colors. From the open desert sky to the bright neon of the city, *Man* glows with a sophisticated spectrum of "natural" light seldom seen in sci-fi films.

Compared to the two previous DVDs — a pale, off-color edition released by Fox Lorber Home Video in 1998, and a very good edition released by Anchor Bay in 2003 — Criterion's new, high-definition picture transfer is crisper, with more consistent colors. Richmond's work is well captured, with attention to detail and minimal artifacting in even the most contrasty transitions. The picture transfer allows for added textures within blacks and a more even sharpness to the images. The 2.0 sound mix is very good, although those who like a louder, more enveloping soundtrack may prefer the fun (albeit artificially engineered) DTS track on Anchor Bay's DVD.

This package includes a specially published edition of the novel and a booklet with essays by critic Graham Fuller and novelist Jack Matthews. The two-disc set is coupled with the novel in a handsome slipcase. Disc one contains the feature presentation along with the excellent 1992 laserdisc commentary track, which offers production anecdotes and comments by Roeg, Bowie and Henry. On disc two, a 26-minute video interview with screenwriter Paul Mayersberg frames the film within genre and the process of adaptation. In the 25-minute "Performance," actors Clark and Torn give new video interviews about their work on the picture. A 1984 radio interview with Tevis supplies an opportunity to hear the writer discuss his work. Audio interviews with costume designer May Routh and production designer Brian Eatwell are presented over sketches and stills of their unusual and detailed work. Also included is an array of theatrical trailers and TV spots, as well as still galleries, promotional materials and other ephemera.

With this DVD, Criterion has again mined its original laserdisc supplements, engineered a new transfer, and created some new supplements to produce an exceptional product. Roeg's meditative tale of existential angst and emotional isolation lives on to engage, perplex and inspire in this DVD. This lush, definitive edition makes "loving the alien" easy.

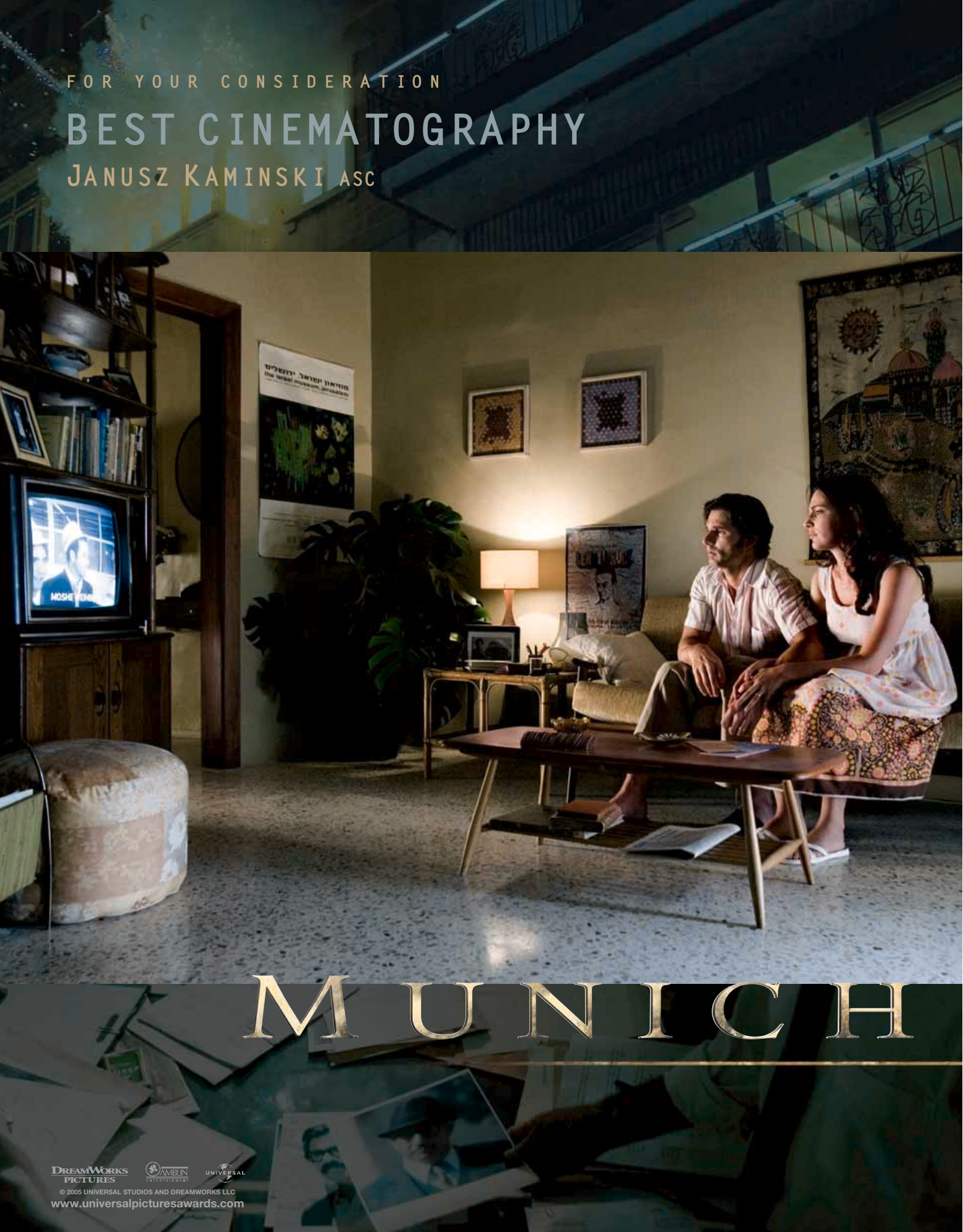
— Kenneth Sweeney



I Walked With a Zombie (1943)/
The Body Snatcher (1945)
1.33:1 (Full Frame)
Dolby Digital Monaural
Warner Home Video, $19.95

After a financially disastrous period that encompassed the releases of Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* and *The Magnificent Ambersons*, RKO Radio Pictures hired fresh production heads in an effort to stem the studio's losses. Several changes were made at the legendary studio, and those in charge hatched a plan to inexpensively emulate the lucrative horror franchises that had

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BEST CINEMATOGRAPHY
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been spawned at Universal. For more than a decade, Universal had enjoyed repeat box-office bonanzas by unleashing *Dracula, Frankenstein, The Mummy, The Invisible Man, Werewolf of London* and their many celluloid offspring, tapping into the public's seemingly endless hunger for Gothic escapism.

Frustrated after spending eight years as producer David O. Selznick's story editor, Val Lewton jumped at the chance to head RKO's new horror unit — anything to get away from making what Lewton called "ponderous trash." Armed with miniscule budgets, lurid titles, and a studio mandate to keep each movie to 75 minutes or less, Lewton set out to make his mark. Unlike the horror offerings from Universal, Lewton's films were visually sophisticated and operated primarily on the power of suggestion and vivid atmospheres. His first effort, *Cat People* (1942), was a phenomenal success, paving the way for eight more movies that remain classics of the genre.

Warner Home Video recently released all of RKO's Lewton-produced thrillers on DVD. Sold as individual titles, double features, and as a boxed set, these stellar thrillers are likely to garner a whole new generation of fans. Two of the most successful and influential are *I Walked With a Zombie* and *The Body Snatcher*, which make an excellent double-feature DVD for seasoned fans and newcomers.

Loosely based on *Jane Eyre, I Walked With a Zombie* delivers young Canadian nurse Betsy (Frances Dee) to the island of St. Sebastian, where she is to care for the mysteriously lethargic wife of a sugar-refinery operator, Paul (Tom Conway). Betsy vows to help cure the patient's strange illness, and this requires her to suspend her disbelief and wander into the native voodoo cult that seems to permeate the island. In one of cinema's most memorable suspense sequences, Betsy escorts her patient on a midnight walk, following the voodoo drums to the root of the black magic that haunts her.

To ensure a dense, threatening atmosphere, Lewton brought Jacques Tourneur onboard as director and hired RKO veteran J. Roy Hunt, ASC *(Flying*

Down to Rio, Mighty Joe Young) to photograph the picture. As a result, *I Walked With a Zombie* is blessed with one of the most distinctive looks in the genre. Hunt made expert use of shadows and shafts of light to obscure and highlight key objects. His vivid work has been transferred in a sharp, fine presentation, although there seem to be minor instances of dirt and blemishes on the source material. The audio offers a clear monaural track, with heavy bass accentuating the eerie voodoo drums that pervade the soundscape.

Based on a ghoulish short story by Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Body Snatcher* tells of Dr. McFarlane (Henry Daniell) and his association with a peculiar "cabbie," John Gray (Boris Karloff). It appears as though the corpses Gray supplies for the doctor's research are fresh from the grave, and some seem to have been supplied just for the order! When McFarlane tries to shake the ghoulish Gray, he gets much more than he bargained for.

Lewton and director Robert Wise brought in RKO veteran cinematographer Robert De Grasse, ASC (*Stage Door, Alice Adams*), who had previously shot *The Leopard Man* for Lewton. De Grasse photographed the mysterious world of murder and grave robbing with an elaborate grayscale, crisp blacks and murky shadows, and the Gothic visual texture is generally well represented on this DVD. As with *Zombie*, there are minor occurrences of blemishes on the source material. The monaural audio track has been well reproduced.

The entertaining supplements that accompany this double-feature DVD include the original theatrical trailers for both pictures and three separate audio commentaries. *Zombie's* buoyant chat track features British film historians Kim Newman and Steve Jones, who offer interesting facts and insights. *Body Snatcher* features a commentary track by Wise that previously appeared on a 1995 laserdisc release; this paints a detailed portrait of Lewton and his work at RKO. Rounding out the track is historian Steve Haberman, who talks about the film's position in Lewton's oeuvre.

This well-produced and affordable DVD makes an excellent addition to any collection. Lewton's timeless efforts continue to offer some of the cinema's most sinister imagery.

— Kenneth Sweeney

■

NEXT MONTH'S REVIEWS

King Kong (1933)
Cinematographers:
Edward Linden, ASC; J.O.Taylor, ASC; and Vernon Walker, ASC

The Wizard of Oz (1939)
Cinematographer:
Harold Rosson, ASC

Ben Hur (1959)
Cinematographer:
Robert L. Surtees, ASC



Production Slate

Secrets and Lies



After landing a job as a tennis instructor at a posh English club, former pro player Chris Wilton (Jonathan Rhys-Meyers, right) hits it off with well-heeled client Tom Hewett (Matthew Goode), who invites Chris into his world of wealth and privilege.

A Perilous Affair

by Jon Silberg

Remi Adefarasin, BSC was already a longtime admirer of Woody Allen's work when he first encountered him in the flesh in New York in 1979, while operating the camera on a documentary about the filmmaker. (He recalls Allen speaking with a measure of disappointment about his upcoming film, *Manhattan*.) Adefarasin's appreciation increased after he listened to Allen expound on his views about filmmaking and life. Since then, Adefarasin's own career has taken off — his feature credits include *Elizabeth* (see *AC* June '99), *House of Mirth* (*AC* Feb. '01) and *About a Boy* — yet it seemed unlikely the British cinematographer would ever collaborate with the famously New York-bound director. But *Match Point* presented him with that happy opportunity. "Woody's style, together with the work of Gordon Willis [ASC], has seeped into my cinematic consciousness," says Adefarasin. "I've been emulating him for years, and with *Match Point* I finally got a chance to discover how it's done."

Set in and around London, *Match Point* focuses on Chris (Jonathan Rhys-Meyers), a tennis pro whose marriage to the sweet, privileged Chloe (Emily Mortimer) enables him to shed his humble background and enter Britain's otherwise-impenetrable upper class. In addition to gaining an adoring wife, Chris gains a top position in her father's company, a chauffeur and a luxurious duplex in the heart of London. But it isn't long before Chris' passion for his brother-in-law's beautiful girlfriend, Nola (Scarlett Johansson), complicates his domestic bliss.

Shot on location in England, *Match Point* is infused with the feel of the city. Adefarasin explains how practical and narrative concerns intersected during location scouting: "[Production designer] Jim Clay was pivotal in encouraging us to play up the contrasts of our city and use really interesting backdrops. Nearly every [exterior] location was chosen with sunlight in mind; the sun is very unkind to faces, and blocking it off the actors can look phony because it often leaves the background in sunlight. In New York, you can cross the sidewalk to avoid the sun, but London's buildings aren't so tall. If we couldn't find a north-facing location, which was the ideal, then we would schedule the location for the best time of day to avoid direct sunlight. [The sun-tracking software] Sunpath came in very handy — as did a lifetime of living in London."

Adefarasin shot the picture in standard 1.85:1 with an Arricam Studio and Arricam Lite, using Zeiss Ultra Prime lenses and 17-80mm and 24-290mm Angenieux Optimo zooms. He used one stock, Kodak Vision2 500T 5218. "It has such range I didn't see a need to use anything else," he says.

The cinematographer approached the film's lighting as he usually does, with an eye to realism. "My gaffer, Jimmy Wilson, and I have been together for years, and Jimmy humors my peculiarities," he says. "I love simplicity and unusual naturalistic effects. I use black lace and ivory silks to break up the emotionless nature of film lights. I use regular diffusion, too, but these fabrics help me make it look as though the subject isn't lit at all. I'm well known in England for using all sorts of textiles to aid lighting. People see me and think, 'Here come the knickers again!' I use ivory silk on two C-stands to further soften a light that's already softened by a 4-by-4 frame [of tracing paper or another standard diffusion material]. Or I might use black lace in front of a 4-by-4 frame to reduce brightness and make the light more organic. You don't actually see the texture of the lace on the actors'

Match Point photos by Clive Coote and Sarah Allentuch, courtesy of DreamWorks Pictures and Remi Adefarasin.

faces because it's coming from a soft source, but it does give the light a natural unevenness."

Adefarasin used textiles to diffuse and/or bounce light in almost every interior shot in *Match Point*. "If you have a 4-by-4 bead board a few feet from an actor's face, you see the result onscreen — it looks like it's been snowing, or like there's a 4-by-4 bead board in the room," he remarks. "We'll use unbleached muslin [with the board] and sometimes paint it a light magnolia or a wheaty color so the light reflecting off it looks like it's bouncing off a wood floor or carpet. And it looks better still if you have a bit of black lace over that. That way, you can use bead board for reflections but the audience can't tell there's a bead board."

One of the film's key encounters takes place in London's stylish Tate Modern, and Adefarasin credits Clay's clever production design and his own crew's efficiency for enabling him to get the necessary material in the small amount of time available. On his way to meet Chloe, Chris enters the spacious, glass-enclosed structure and notices Nola on an escalator below. He catches up to her, and the situation culminates in an awkward moment when Chloe joins the pair in a gallery. Adefarasin recalls, "The shot of Chris seeing Nola on the escalator posed a particular reflection problem because the camera had to be square to a window when he first sees her. Jim Clay is one of England's finest designers, and he built a box for the camera that was painted so that it looked like a graphic on the wall. The mattebox is reflected in the



Despite his marriage to Tom's sister, Chris cannot resist a fling with Tom's alluring fiancée, Nola (Scarlett Johansson).





Right: Director Woody Allen frames a shot with Remi Adefarasin, BSC. Below: Allen and Adefarasin ponder their options while shooting on the Hungerford Pedestrian Bridge in London.

glass in the shot, but because of Jim's work, you can't tell what it is.

"The people at the Tate were quite kind in allowing us to film there," he continues, "but we could only work from 7 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., so we had to know exactly what shots we were doing so that each setup could be pre-rigged. Even the tracks were laid down in advance so we could start shooting right away. We then almost leapfrogged from shot to shot."

The cinematographer is particularly pleased with the latter part of the scene, because the gallery wasn't actually in the Tate — it was a set Clay had designed and built in a warehouse. "Those modern-art paintings that Chris, Chloe and Nola stand in front of were originally watercolors painted by Jim's wife that a scenic artist later copied onto large canvasses," he reveals. "We couldn't have shot that whole scene and the shots on the escalator in the few hours we had at the museum."

Although the house where Chloe's parents live appears to be quite large and imposing, Adefarasin says the location was actually much larger than it looks on film. "It had a castellated roof, and that made it look more foreboding than we wanted, so we shot cunningly to make it look smaller. You never actually see the roofline; we never went way back to show the whole mansion. We shot the front and the back, but you never see the middle."

It is in that house where Chris first encounters Nola, whom he spots playing Ping-Pong in a game room. Adefarasin says careful pre-rigging at the location enabled the production to shoot quickly. "We sometimes had two location moves each day, and pre-rigging often saved the day," he says. "The scene where Chris and Nola meet had to have a little magic, so we planned to have Nola backlit [by a window] and Chris facing the window. The room is supposed to be on the ground floor, but it was actually one floor up, so we used nets on the lower part of the window to disguise that. Because of the brightness outside, we had .9ND gels cut [to fit] the windows."

The pre-rigging crew used a Genie boom to position a 12K HMI above the window to provide some directional light inside. Additionally, three Zap (a.k.a. Zip) lights were rigged above the window on the inside, and a 2.5K HMI was diffused and bounced off a wall of fabric to provide fill on the actors. A piece of show card was placed on the Ping-Pong table to bounce light onto Johansson's face. "That would normally have cost the shooting team hours to rig, but we walked in ready to go," says Adefarasin.

The cinematographer did not finish *Match Point* with a digital intermediate (DI) — Allen has never used the process — but he feels the enhanced control facilitated by a DI would have helped with a few sequences. "I would love to get Woody in a DI suite for an hour or so," he says, "because I know I could persuade him about the benefits." One area where it could prove effective, he says, is in creating the warm ambience to which





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Allen is partial. "From *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, one of my favorite films of his, up to today, his films have been getting progressively warmer," he observes. "Shooting with a warming filter on the lens or the lights or timing the image warm results in everything going the same color, and that's an unsatisfying look. In one scene, it was snowing outside of Nola's apartment, and frankly, it looks a bit ridiculous to have tea-colored snow."

Adefarasin often achieved the warmth Allen wanted through color timing, which was carried out at Technicolor London. In anticipation of that work, he, Clay and costume designer Jill Taylor strove to introduce cooler colors into the frame. "Chris and Chloe's apartment is a lovely green color," says the cinematographer, "and we used shades of greens and blues there so that when I eventually made the image warmer, it would retain some colors and have a more chromatic display. Otherwise, it becomes a sepia movie." The technique worked well, he says, "but a DI would have allowed us to warm the scenes and keep some white tones, too."

For Adefarasin, the experience of working with Allen on *Match Point* and the director's subsequent film, *Scoop* (also set in London), was everything he'd hoped for, and more. "Woody loves the image," he says. "He tests actors' makeup and costumes more than any director I've worked for, which was very helpful and also allowed the whole team to bond. He knows what he needs and shoots only that.

"He really is a great thinker, and I don't mean that in an intellectual sense. I was worried at first, because when he was told about some problem he'd stand perfectly still for about two minutes. At first I thought I'd better look 'round for the nurse, but then he snapped back to life and had worked out the solution in a most exquisite way. He had run through all the implications a particular change would have for every part of the story and had solved those problems, too."



The opening shot of *Caché* reveals a Paris home that is under video surveillance for reasons unknown to the homeowners.

Caché photos courtesy of Les Films du Losange and Sony Pictures Classics. Photo on page 33 courtesy of Christian Berger.

Lives on Tape
by Jean Oppenheimer

A political allegory wrapped in a tense thriller, *Caché (Hidden)* marks the latest collaboration between Austrian cinematographer Christian Berger, AAC, and director Michael Haneke. The picture premiered at the 2005 Cannes Film Festival, where Haneke earned the prize for Best Director. Berger's work on the film won the Audience Award and the International Critics Prize at the 26th annual Manaki Brothers International Film Camera Festival in Macedonia, and he was nominated for the European Cinematographer award at the Berlin Film Festival.

Caché concerns an upper-middle-class Parisian couple, Georges and Anne (Daniel Auteuil and Juliette Binoche), who receive an anonymous videotape that consists of a single, static shot of their house that was apparently recorded from across the street. The shot continues uninterrupted for two hours. There is no note with the tape, no indication of who sent it or why. Soon more tapes arrive, accompanied by childlike drawings of a primitive stick figure with a violent slash of red exploding from its head.

On one level, the picture is an unsettling whodunit. But like nearly all of Haneke's films, it is also a critique of contemporary Western society, touching upon issues of guilt and responsibility, alienation and repression, fear of "the other," and the arrogance of the First World toward the Third World.

Another recurring theme in Haneke's work is that the media are manipulators. *Caché*'s opening shot brings home this point visually. It is a stationary, wide exterior of Georges and Anne's house. After perhaps four minutes, the footage suddenly seems to accelerate. It turns out we are looking not at the actual house, but at a videotaped image of the house that the couple are watching on their television. This subterfuge is repeated several times during the course of the film, always catching the viewer off guard because the video footage looks exactly like the "real" locations.

"It was very important that we should see no difference between the quality of the tapes and the reality," says Berger, speaking by phone from his home in Vienna. "We initially hoped to mix film and digital, but that didn't produce a satisfactory 'video look,' so we decided to go all digital. We tested all manner of digital cameras, and although Panasonic's HD camera proved most comfortable to handle, only the Sony HDW-750 and F900 models gave us the 'video look' on 35mm that we wanted. Even though we looked all over Europe, it wasn't possible to find three of the same cameras, so we used both."

Berger's camera package, which included Zeiss DigiPrimes, was rented

from TSF in Paris. He shot the picture in 16x9, and it was subsequently recorded to 35mm with a 1.85:1 hard matte.

The cinematographer reports that shooting hi-def proved far more problematic than he expected. "Everything you hear about 'beautiful HD imagery' is just propaganda. We ended up using six cameras because they kept breaking, and we *still* had focus problems two or three times a day. Regardless of the viewfinder configuration, the viewfinder quality in low-light conditions is unacceptable for cinema requirements. It all worked out in the end, but shooting digitally was definitely *not* cheaper for the producer."

The production shot for five weeks in Paris and four in Vienna. Post-production was also divided between the two cities; Éclair Laboratories in France generated video safety copies, and Listo Film and Video in Vienna handled the color-correction and final transfer to 35mm. In the midst of production, when Berger received some "electronically catastrophic messages such as moirés, interference, double contours in the blue channel or uncontrollable focus problems," Listo also generated some 35mm prints of select scenes so the filmmakers could assess their work. Accustomed to photochemical timing, Berger had difficulty adapting to digital grading, which was carried out on a da Vinci 2K using a Sony monitor. "What you see on the monitor doesn't necessarily correspond to [the look you will get on film]," he notes dryly.

Caché consists predominantly of lengthy wide and medium-wide shots taken with a camera that is usually stationary. There is typically little activity within the frame, and the absence of activity and camera movement in scene after scene helps build enormous tension. "Haneke doesn't show anything," notes Berger. "Nothing happens, and that's the secret to the tension. The film doesn't have the vocabulary of a thriller, nor [does it contain] traditional suspense techniques." Referring to the film's title, he adds, "In a sense, you could say that the style itself is hidden."



Berger's work on this and three prior features was strongly influenced by a proprietary lighting system, the B&B Cine Reflect Light System (CRLS), that he designed in collaboration with lighting engineer Christian Bartenbach and the Bartenbach Light Research Center. The cinematographer first experimented with CRLS on Haneke's *The Piano Teacher* (see *AC* May '02), but he didn't rely on it exclusively until his next film, *Dead Man's Memories*. The system consists of a single, powerful source of illumination — which Berger refers to as a "projector" because it projects the light beam — that is used in conjunction with a series of aluminum reflectors. These reflectors, also called "laminations," are specially calculated to give a specific shape, quality and direction to the light reaching the scene. "I can make the light soft or hard and modulate it as I want," says Berger. "And because the surface of the reflector defines the quality of the light, I can create different effects by using laminations with different textures." The laminations, designed by the Bartenbach Laboratory of Light, range from 1.5"x1.5" (for an eyelight) to 3'x3'.

The projector and reflector (or a "mainframe" that holds four individual reflectors) can be set up on separate stands or aligned on the same base. "Regular tubular components can be used to set up a rigid base of about 13 feet," explains Berger. "This base can be mounted on heavy-duty stands or fixed onto a cherry-picker or construction crane. The luminary is mounted at one



Above: The increasingly agitated couple, Georges (Daniel Auteuil) and Anne (Juliette Binoche), argue with a cyclist (Diouc Koma) outside a police station. Below: Anne tries to track down their son, Pierrot, who has gone missing. In the background, footage of a conflict in the Middle East underscores the story's racial tension.



Georges' childhood nemesis, Majid (Maurice Bénichou), is dismayed by the recent turn of events.

end of the base, and the reflector frames can be placed all along the beam of light.

"There is no need for flags, cutters or traditional light stands on the set," he continues. "Furthermore, power consumption is kept to a minimum. On *Caché*, we had a connecting load of only 5 or 6 kilowatts — that's like three vacuum cleaners! I never required more than that." Further advantages of the system include a reduction of lighting time and enhanced freedom for the cast and camera because there are no electrical cables snaking across the floor. "Also, the glare and heat is remarkably reduced," adds Berger.

The CRLS prototype was a 1.2K HMI, but a variety of sources can be employed. Berger notes that in order to effectively mimic sunlight, the lamp must send out parallel light beams, which means existing halogen sources are not suitable. "Xenon luminaries are quite similar," he says, "but the output is often much too high. It is also not 'clean' enough for film lighting design."

Two things motivated Berger to develop the CRLS. First, he was fed up with conventional film lighting — "It's all the same uniform light quality," he complains. Second, he wanted to try something new with *Piano Teacher* star Isabelle Huppert. "Isabelle presents a big challenge because she is very critical of the light on her face," he explains. "We had two extremely long, difficult sequences in *Piano Teacher* — one was a half-seduction/half-rape — and there simply was no room to place conventional lights. I didn't want to light from the ceiling." With a laugh, he adds, "I



had to use the new technique secretly, hiding it among the conventional lamps, because Haneke hates experimenting while shooting. After he experienced the CRLS on *Caché*, however, he said, 'This concept is revolutionary, and directors and actors will love you for it.'

"Just one 1.2K HMI located on the edge of the set, or even outside the set, can be split to provide a high-quality fill light and a modulated keylight. By placing a pair of complementary reflectors, a backlight can also be created, still only using the single luminary." Berger prefers to have the projector off to the side of the set, outside a building or even around a corner; that way, the reflectors pick up the stray light from the beam. One projector is usually sufficient to light an entire scene, although Berger used two for the recurring shot of Georges and Anne's house in *Caché*. "At night you see the house in front and some Parisian buildings on the hills in the background. They're all lit up, but you don't realize it because with the laminations, you can distribute the light above the houses." One 575-watt projector was placed on a nearby rooftop, and another was on the street, out of frame. He positioned the reflectors so that different light was cast on the various buildings in the shot. He only used gels to create or correct colors on the projectors — for example, warming them for a sunlight effect. He seldom uses filtration on the lens.

Berger says most of his collaborations with Haneke are filmed with just one or two lenses, usually a 35mm and a 50mm. "We both hate wide angles; we prefer the normal perspective of the human eye." That preference posed a problem on *Caché* because the only DigiPrimes available at the time were 14mm and 20mm. "There was nothing in between," says Berger. "We had to use fixed lenses, so we ended up using the 14mm, which is a little wider than we wanted."

Berger says he and Haneke, who began working together in 1992, share a preference for "long sequences and a close interpretation of framing. Concerning the basic understanding and aesthetic questions, we also agree very much. We never need to discuss things — it's clear from his writing what the lenses and compositions should be. He conceives every script with that in mind." ■



Christian Berger, AAC (center) discusses the CRLS Lighting Crane with crewmembers in London.

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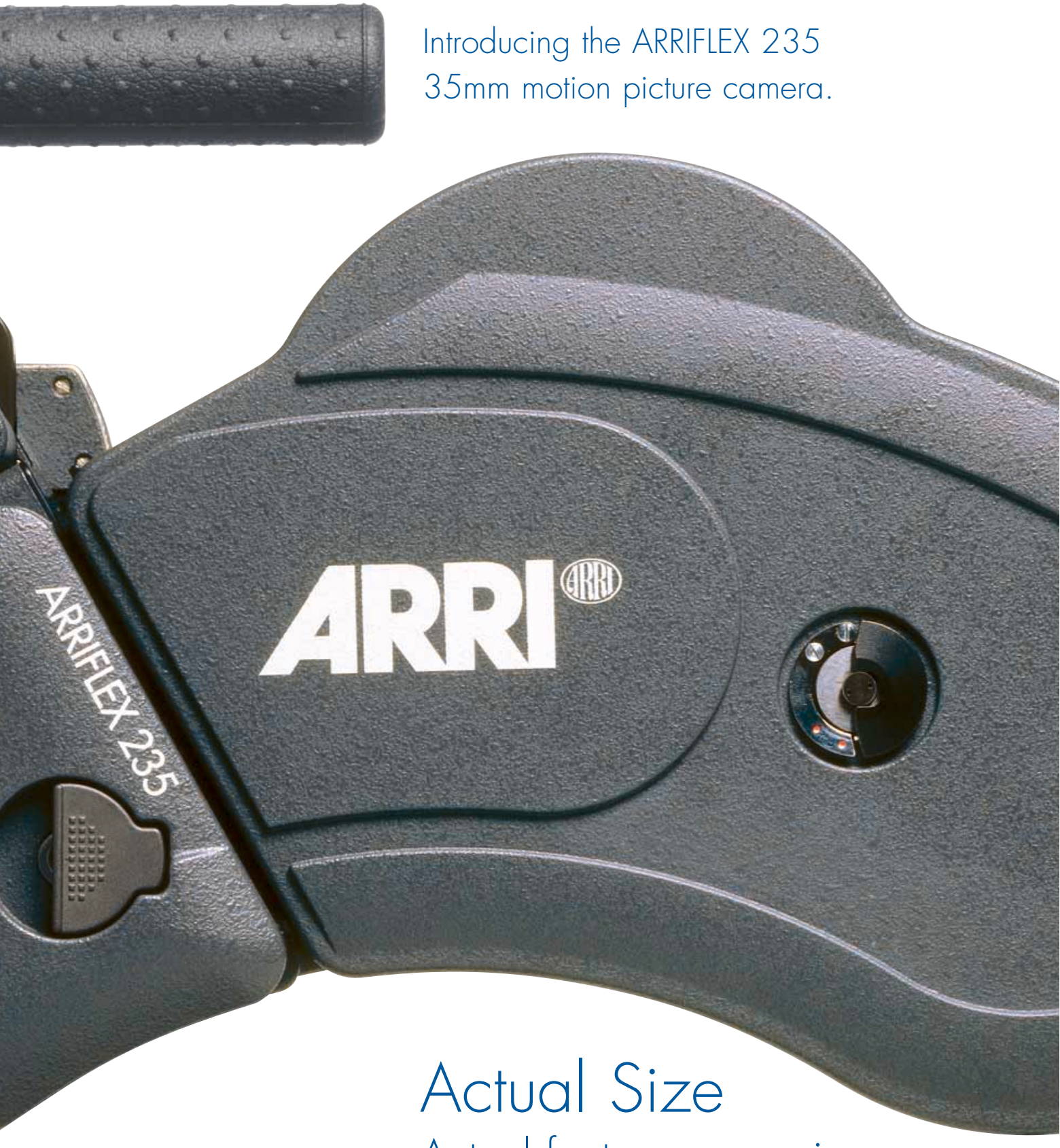
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Feminine Mystique

Memoirs of a Geisha, shot by Dion Beebe, ASC, ACS, unfurls the lavish saga of a celebrated Japanese seductress.

by Patricia Thomson

Unit photography by David James, SMPSP

As soon as Arthur Golden's *Memoirs of a Geisha* hit bookstores in 1997, the fictional memoir of a geisha in 1930s Kyoto became a surprise sensation. Eight years later, *Memoirs of a Geisha* is making its motion-picture debut. The core creative team reunites collaborators from the movie *Chicago*: director Rob Marshall; director of photography Dion Beebe, ASC, ACS; production designer John Myhre, and costume designer Colleen Atwood.

Beebe earned Oscar and BAFTA nominations for *Chicago* (see *AC* Feb. '02), then went on to receive a BAFTA award and an ASC nomination for his work with co-cinematographer Paul Cameron on *Collateral* (*AC* Aug. '04). His credits also include *In the Cut* (*AC* Nov. '03), *Praise* and *What I Have Written.*

For many readers, *Memoirs of a Geisha*'s appeal lay in its vivid portrayal of geisha life. Neither wife nor prostitute, geisha in pre-war Japan were highly trained entertain-





Opposite: The adolescent Chiyo (Ziyi Zhang) hones her natural beauty into irresistible allure when she begins studying the ways of the geisha. This page: As a child, Chiyo (played in these scenes by Suzuka Ohgo), is sold to the Nitta household, where she toils as a maid.

ers prized for their skills in dance, music and conversation. They acted as social lubricant for businessmen who entertained clients at teahouses. More successful ones also had a special patron, a financial provider who was a long-term lover.

Memoirs of a Geisha couples this backdrop with a Cinderella-like plot. Recounting her life story is Chiyo (Suzuka Ohgo), who is born in a poor fishing village. When her mother dies, the girl and her sister are sold, with Chiyo sent to the Kyoto district of Gion to work in a geisha house. She starts as a maid and is terrorized by Hatsumomo (Gong Li), a vicious geisha protective of her turf. One day Chiyo breaks into tears while on an errand, and a polished gentleman known as the Chairman (Ken Watanabe) stops to offer words of comfort. Struck by Chiyo's unusual blue eyes, he gives her money for an ice cone. The girl is smitten. Instead of buying a cone, she runs to the temple to make a wish: to become a geisha worthy of a man like the Chairman. The story then follows Chiyo's struggle for success, as she finally becomes the most prized geisha in Kyoto under a new name, Sayuri (Ziyi Zhang). War breaks out, then ends, and so does the golden age of geisha. But the story continues through these waning years, until Sayuri is finally united with the love of her life.

In tackling the film adaptation, Marshall and his collaborators wrestled with several challenges: How do you re-create the epic breadth of this world? How do you reconstruct the entertainment district of Kyoto, now a shadow of its former self? And how do you render the flat light of Kyoto on a sunny backlot in California?

The first step was a trip to Japan. "We just walked through the world, in a way," says Beebe. "We were in Gion and the teahouse that Arthur Golden writes about. We were served by geisha. We went to the geisha school, watched Kabuki theater, and walked through Kyoto's temples and shrines." It was clear Gion wouldn't work as a practical location because it is now filled with power lines and modern façades, but Beebe took countless photographs of Kyoto's temple grounds, its special light and its famous hills. "For me, it was a great reference to soak up the atmosphere," he says.

Upon their return, all departments assembled their research in one room and "started to piece together a world that doesn't entirely exist anymore," says Beebe. The cinematographer then began running tests, working with Panavision



Photos courtesy of Sony Pictures.

Feminine Mystique



Right: The film's geisha district, or *hanamachi*, was built at a horse ranch in Ventura. Located near Los Angeles, the site offered mountainous vistas and 360° views of the surrounding valley. Over 14 weeks, a pasture was transformed into five blocks of cobblestone streets and alleyways. To help simulate the flat winter light of Kyoto, key grip Scott Robinson and his crew covered the enormous set with a retractable silk suspended from two freestanding trusses. Below: Dion Beebe, ASC, ACS angles in on the action.



anamorphic lenses and cameras. He and his colleagues looked at kimono fabrics in the golden light that would dominate the film. They tested white geisha makeup. ("It's not very flattering," Beebe notes of the thick, caked base. "We adapted it so we could shoot close and not be afraid.") He and Myhre also took considerable pains with Japan's sliding paper screens, *sojii*. "In every period Japanese film," Beebe explains, "they tend to look pretty bad, mostly because it's white paper and is often backlit or frontlit. It always feels like the brightest thing in the room." This conflicted with the goal he and Marshall had in mind: to create a dark, veiled world that would gradually be revealed. "The metaphor was a peeling away of layers, and [the white *sojii*] was going to work against us every time. Some of the first tests we did were to see how to create a dark, textured *sojii*." Myhre collected dozens of paper samples of varying thicknesses, textures and dye techniques, finally winnowing them down to a selection of paper and fabrics that worked.

Another critical piece in the planning was Myhre's ¼" scale model of the geisha district. The set, complete with period façades, cobblestone streets and a snaking river, would be built on a sprawling horse ranch in Ventura, California, where the surrounding mountains would stand in for Kyoto's peaks. Additional exteriors were filmed in Japan and Northern California. The interiors were mostly constructed onstage at Sony Pictures' Culver City lot.

By dropping a lipstick camera into the model, Beebe and Marshall could not only plot several major crane shots, but also could "anticipate that fact that at some point we'd run out of places to shoot," says the cinematographer. "We had a couple of key journeys through this town; one is when Chiyo arrives in a rickshaw and is taken through the streets, and another is when she runs away." Using the model, "we figured out how to block streets, change surfaces of passageways, and change façades so we could really expand this set. It was a great device. It gave us the chance to make alterations prior to John starting construction."

It also helped address the issue of Kyoto's northern light. "When I



A nighttime view of the truss rigs. Measuring 50' high x 260' long, the structures stood 300' apart.

first walked in, everyone was looking at the model," recalls key grip Scott Robinson. "They turned to me and said, 'How do we make this look like winter?' I said, 'I think you have to silk the set.' Well, it turned out the scale was more than 2.5 acres. So unbeknownst to me and Don Reynolds, my rigging key grip, we started designing the largest free-standing structure that's ever been put over a set."

The canopy was enormous, with 3 miles of silent grid cloth comprising a series of overlapping, retractable panels. This silk was suspended from two freestanding trusses that were designed with the help of Michael Krevitt at ShowRig and surveyors and structural engineers. "Mike and his team ended up developing a specialized truss to handle the load of the stress," says Robinson. Each structure was 50' high x 260' long, and they stood 300' apart. Because the clay soil wasn't solid enough to anchor the weight, the canopy was tied by 4 miles of Kevlar ropes to septic tanks filled with 1 million gallons of water. "We bought out a cesspool factory," Robinson says with a laugh. "That's the only thing we could come up with."

Ironically, wind and rain were constant hazards. Southern California was hit by record-breaking rainstorms just days before photography commenced, and wind worked relentlessly to blow the entire structure away. On the first day of the shoot, "the silk was full of water and was drooping on top of the roofs," recalls Robinson. "That's when Dion really showed his cool and his patience." Fortunately, Robinson had an epiphany. "I realized it was more than rigging the silk — we actually had to learn how to *sail* the silk, very much like a boat. We had to trim the sails and learn how to adjust to the different winds that went through the valley." Within a week, the rigging crews stationed on north and south towers were not only in control of the canopy, but competing like America's Cup teams.

During daytime scenes, the silk effectively controlled the sun, and Beebe produced his own "sunlight" using BeBee lights to create a controlled three-quarter backlight. But the filmmakers soon discovered another advantage. One day, when dusk came, gaffer John Buckley threw some toplight onto the silk to continue the daytime scene. "It was the most beautiful light you ever saw," says Robinson. "It looked like winter light, and at that point we started incorporating [night for day] into the shooting schedule." Buckley positioned two BeBees on fully extended crane arms above the silk, then added 18Ks in alleyways and behind façades to bounce light into whatever dark holes existed at street level.

Unfortunately, the canopy structure did not make a bird's-eye perspective easy, and this became a problem for a key transition: it's cherry-blossom season, and Chiyo has just received coins from the Chairman. She runs through the town, up some stairs, and into a temple, where she makes her wish. The camera then drifts up to the sky, snowflakes start to fall, and then the camera comes down with the snow across the rooftops, finally flying through a window to reveal the first glimpse of the older Chiyo. This seemingly single shot actually started on the backlot, transitioned to Japan and the Fushimi Inari shrine and a second Buddhist temple, and then resumed on the backlot.

"That was a key shot that Rob and I discussed early on, and a lot of the layout of our backlot hinged on it," says Beebe. "As we came across the rooftops, we wanted to see the real depth of the world. We couldn't do that in one big shot, but we could in a series of big shots. When they were cut together, it would feel like this was a world bigger than just this little town or our backlot."

For the overhead view, the filmmakers considered using a

Feminine Mystique



Right: Paper lanterns lend a festive look to the geisha-district set. Below: Chiyo holds an umbrella to keep the rain from dampening the imperious geisha Hatsumomo (Gong Li), who will see the little servant girl grow up to become her main rival.

Cablecam or Spydercam but rejected both ideas because the necessary cabling would have been too costly. Beebe and Reynolds studied the scale model further. "Again, the advantage of the model was that we could look at it and say, 'You know, the façades only come up 30 feet, so we could drop a massive platform over the rooftops.' And that's what we did." They built a 35'x100' platform, which held dolly tracks and a 50' Technocrane. "It was easy to envision when you've just got little cut-outs," says Beebe, but harder to accomplish when a construction crane is needed to put the Technocrane in place. But "it worked beautifully," he says. "We dollied the Technocrane as we did the move, swinging off the sky and coming down into the alleyway and right into the house. It was quite an achievement."



This kind of fluid camera movement is a constant in *Memoirs of a Geisha*. Dollies were used 80 percent of the time, with Steadicam and crane work splitting the balance. "[A-camera/Steadicam operator] Peter Rosenfeld and [B-camera operator] Sion Michel did a great job with so much moving camera," says Beebe. A Chapman PeeWee dolly served in tight spaces — and there were many because the interiors were built to Japanese scale. Practical ceilings were used because of the camera's waist-high perspective, which was designed to convey the eye level of a person kneeling or seated on the floor.

If a 20' Technocrane couldn't fit inside a space, the crew would mount a small Arrow crane with a 12' jib on a Chapman hybrid dolly and fit it with a remote HotGears system. For numerous low-angle moves, an underslung Cartoni/Lamda head was used. Able to pass through small doorframes



Chiyo begins her geisha training with the help of her mentor, the legendary Mameha (Michelle Yeoh).

and reach into rooms, "it was essentially our tool for doing moves inside the sets," says Beebe. "And we did some quite complicated moves with this system."

One example is a two-minute shot when Sayuri is first seen in her lavish apprentice-geisha costume. After a montage showing her dressing and applying makeup, says Beebe, "we move from a little courtyard, past the characters Mother and Auntie and toward the paper doors, which slide open before us. We push in and find Sayuri in full kimono and full makeup for the first time. She turns to us. Then the shot moves from inside this room, back out the sliding doors, through the courtyard and out into the street as she climbs onto a rickshaw and takes off."



Such camera movement isn't surprising, given Marshall's background in choreography. "Rob loves to choreograph the actors and camera, and he really understands movement," says Beebe. This is especially evident when Sayuri makes her public debut with a solo dance. "I think that's a wonderful moment," says the cinematographer. "The dance is fantastic and wonderfully



Feminine Mystique





After transforming herself from an aspiring apprentice (far right) into the intoxicating geisha known as Sayuri (above), our heroine makes her name with a transcendent performance. Below: Director Rob Marshall works out a scene with Yeoh and Zhang.

choreographed, but what defines the moment are the faces of our key players in the audience as they watch Sayuri perform. Rob can take those theatrical elements and weave them into the story." Robinson adds, "Rob can make a dance tell a story. Everyone was part of the rehearsal, so everyone understood each segment, the timing, the cues. That made it easy to shoot sequentially."

For the dance, three to four cameras were rolling instead of the usual two. "We used a lot of traditional tracking dolly shots," says Beebe, "as well as the Arrow crane for close-up movements along the runway. We also ended up running a 30-foot Technocrane up on the stage; we'd telescope the arm all the way up the runway so that as she did her dance, we could retract the arm and pull her along the elevated walkway. Because there was no room to put any track down or have an operator, the Technocrane worked particularly well."

Though he was faithful to period lighting in the rest of the film, Beebe took great liberties during this dance number. "Japan had electric lights back then but no ability to use rich color at all," he says. "But Rob wanted the deep saturation of color that we used in *Chicago*." Working in a former theater in downtown Los Angeles, Beebe and his team installed Vari-Lites with programmable color-



wheels. "We had a lot of light cues throughout the dance — nothing anybody could have done in the 1930s, but we wanted a dramatic impact," says Beebe. "A control desk ran all the Vari-Lites and a separate desk ran the film lights; the house lights dim down on one desk as the theatrical lights come up on another. Also, paper lanterns were tied into the dimming board. It became a quite complicated series of lighting cues, and we spent two days working [the sequence] out." Gas footlights added a period touch, he adds. "According to John's research, a scalloped frontpiece reflected the gaslight back at the players. So we had computerized Vari-Lites in the ceiling and gas footlights in the floor, integrating modern and traditional [sources]."

Traditional sources like oil lanterns, cooking fires, paper lanterns housing 25-watt or 40-watt bulbs, and antique electrical bulbs dominated the rest of the film. "I knew we wanted to pursue a practical-lighting approach," says Beebe. "I also knew I wanted to work in very



Left: Under the watchful eyes of Auntie (Tsai Chin) and Mother (Kaori Momoi), Chiyo completes the final phase of her training with Mameha. Below: Chiyo serves sake while making her debut as the geisha Sayuri.

low-light situations." For that reason, he shot most of the picture on Kodak Vision2 500T 5218, which he often pushed one stop. This was supplemented by Vision 200T 5274 pushed to 400 ASA. "I prefer to use tungsten-based stocks even for day exteriors, because it affords a certain flexibility," he notes.

Throughout the picture, Beebe's lighting suggests "a journey through time, a narrative progression," he says. "Young Chiyo arrives frightened and scared in this strange house. We wanted it to feel dark and mysterious to capture how it must have felt to this young child." Then, as Chiyo gains confidence and control of her life, "light starts to come in. Very subtly, we used this metaphor: the interior opens up and reveals the transformation from young girl to woman to geisha. This was a combination of lighting effects and set design." Sliding screens are closed at the beginning but open as the film progresses, and panels change from solid wood to reed, paper and glass.

Golden's novel makes much of Chiyo's first glimpse of electrical lights when she arrives in Kyoto, and Beebe carefully integrated these into the lighting design as the story progresses. The practicals were bare, antique bulbs with large coiled filaments, "but they really didn't give that much light," says Buckley, and they were further dimmed to make the coil visible. As a result, they were often augmented with small Kino Flos or soft lights. But inside the geisha house, lightbulbs were rare. "We wanted to suggest that this place was somehow fixed in time," says Beebe. "This was a place steeped in tradition, so we stayed essentially with lantern light for most of that interior throughout the movie. We made use of electric light mostly for



Feminine Mystique

Right: The crew prepares a period plane for one of the film's wartime sequences. Below: During the flight, Sayuri and other geisha are pressed into service to curry favor with U.S. military personnel.



post-war scenes as a means of reflecting the changing attitudes towards the old ways."

Augmenting the firelight was a "covered wagon," one of Buckley's creations. Short batten strips measuring 1'-4' held rows of cleat sockets, which accommodated regular lightbulbs. Avery wire created a 4" gap over the bulbs, which were topped by Full Grid cloth and Full Straw gels. This soft light was cabled to two flicker boxes. "It worked pretty well," says Buckley. "I had about 30 of each. Really, that was the light of this movie." Beebe adds, "It takes up very little space. We often shot wide in tight interiors, so we'd have these 1-foot flicker effects tucked behind whatever piece of furniture was available." When there wasn't enough furniture, serving trays and even the actors were used to hide lights.

Beebe's low-light approach wouldn't immediately suggest the use of the anamorphic 2.40:1 format, but it's what he and Marshall preferred. "Both of us immediately felt *Geisha* was a widescreen film," says Beebe. "It needed that size to give the story scope, and it was important to me to shoot the full negative. I also felt that [anamorphic] would contribute to the mystery of this world. I knew we were going to be using a foreground layering effect, and anamorphic would allow focus to fall off nicely. Within those small sets, the walls in the close-ups become more textural rather than immediately present."



Beebe took inspiration from Stanley Kubrick's *Barry Lyndon* (*AC* March '76), the first picture to be lit mainly with daylight and practical candlelight. "Those shots are completely static because there's no depth of field at all," he notes. "It creates portraits that are so painterly. With that in mind, [first AC] Mike Weldon and I went to Panavision, sat with [senior vice president of marketing] Phil Radin and [senior technical adviser] Dan Sasaki and discussed how we wanted to shoot in anamorphic in low light. Most

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Feminine Mystique



Most buildings at the Ventura site were constructed only as exteriors, but interiors for a few key sets were built on Sony soundstages.

anamorphic lenses work best at about T4 as the standard setting, but I wanted to shoot at T2." Panavision ultimately provided a full set of fast E- and C-series anamorphic primes. "One was a 40mm that opened up to a T1.3, which is unheard of for anamorphic," says Beebe. "That allowed me to shoot most of the movie at under T2.8, which really was key to the look. I could use literally two bulbs tucked away on a 1-foot strip and supplement with low levels of additional light. If I was trying to get up to T5.6 on, say, a regular anamorphic zoom, it could not have worked. I'd have had to supplement with much bigger sources.

"Working under T2.8 in the anamorphic format with a moving camera is sort of frightening," he continues. "I could have started that way and realized it wasn't going to work." The key to success, in his view, were Weldon and B-camera first AC John Grillo. "They were able to actually work those stops. It was they who really allowed me to shoot the film this way, because it could have been too compromising otherwise."

Focus in *Memoirs of a Geisha* shifts frequently, as in the three-minute shot that takes viewers inside the teahouse for the first time. Steadicam operator Peter Rosenfeld follows two patrons down a corridor, then turns to trail a waitress, focusing on her tray and sake bottle. Doors slide open, revealing the grand room filled with seated guests. One gets up to leave and the camera follows, pivoting as Sayuri and her mentor enter the room. "Focus was particularly hard because a couple of differ-



ent hand-offs happen," says Beebe of this shot. "Once again, we were working under T2.8, which some would say is terribly inconsiderate of the focus puller, even irrational! But it created a quality of light that captured the spirit and atmosphere I wanted."

The picture's tricky focus work made 35mm film dailies particularly important. While on the Sony lot, Beebe and his collaborators watched film dailies every day, but elsewhere, high-definition digital dailies were the rule. "The issue of film dailies versus digital dailies is debated a lot," says Beebe. "It expedites the process to have digital dailies, but it's important to screen select film dailies in order to keep a reference. We screened footage every day while on the lot, and considering the critical focus, this facility was key to monitoring our work. Plus, what cinematographer doesn't enjoy screened dailies?"

When *Geisha* reached the color-timing stage, Beebe had already moved on to Michael Mann's *Miami Vice*. But he managed one trip to Technicolor Digital Intermediates (TDI) in Los Angeles, where he spent two days working with colorist Scott Gregory. Because of the compressed timeframe, they would grab key frames in a sequence, grade them, and then move on. These stored frames became reference points for Gregory, Marshall and editor Pietro Scalia later on. "It does work," Gregory says of this frame-store approach. "That sets the look of the film, and from that point on, it's basically balancing and trimming." At the end of the process, Beebe managed one more trip to Deluxe Laboratories in Hollywood to check the first film-out reels and make final timing adjustments with the lab.

The decision to finish *Geisha* with a DI was made late in the game, and Beebe therefore "approached this film very much in a traditional way," he says. "I never allowed myself to think, 'We'll fix that in the DI.' We protected ourselves and got what we needed in camera." The result, says Gregory, was "a beautiful negative — gorgeous and very opulent." ■

TECHNICAL SPECS

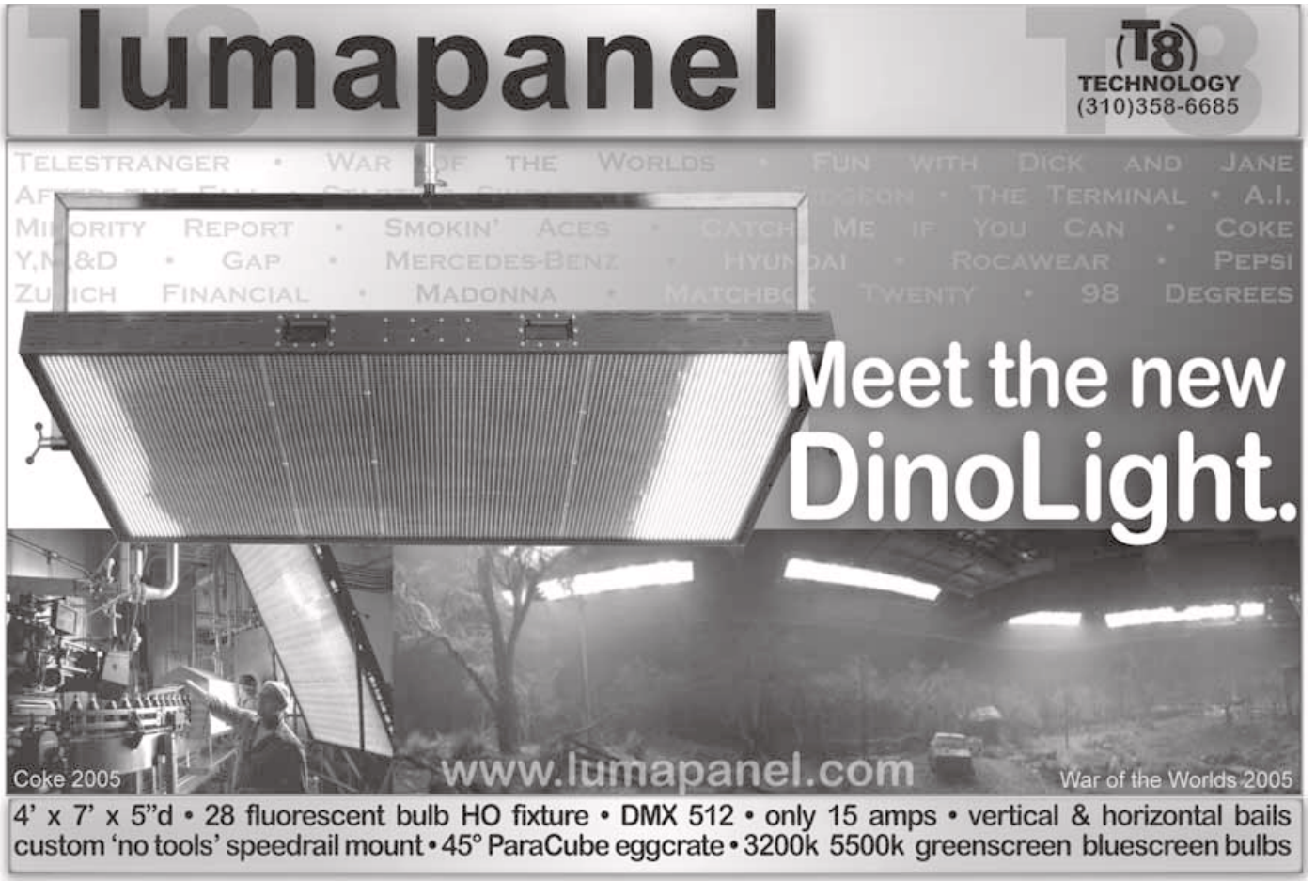
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Uncharted Emotions



Emmanuel Lubezki, ASC, AMC takes a poetic approach to *The New World*, which depicts the fabled saga of Capt. John Smith and Pocahontas.

by Benjamin B

Unit photography by Merie Weismiller-Wallace, SMPSP

Terrence Malick's films are defined by landscapes that have been the occasion for memorable cinematography: the gloomy expanse of the Dakota *Badlands*, the stunning wheat fields and magic hours of *Days of Heaven*, and the lush natural world of a Pacific island in *The Thin Red Line* (see *AC* Feb. '99). In Malick's latest



Opposite: Capt. John Smith (Colin Farrell) forms a powerful emotional bond with a Native American princess (Q'Orianka Kilcher) after arriving in America. This page, left: Smith faces the wrath of the tribe's chieftains during an attempt to negotiate with their king. Below: Emmanuel Lubezki, ASC, AMC says he and director Terrence Malick developed a "charter" of guiding principles for their approach to the material, but he adds, "We could break any rule, and indeed, we broke them all."

film, *The New World*, director of photography Emmanuel "Chivo" Lubezki, ASC, AMC renders the forests and rivers of Virginia in a visual style that is original and poetic, but when he sat down with *AC* to discuss the picture, he prefaced his remarks by cautioning, "A lot of people associate Terry with the look of *Days of Heaven*, and those fans may be disappointed [by *The New World*]. I hope they don't blame me, but we chose not to shoot with pretty light."

The New World is a lyrical recounting of the story of Pocahontas (Q'Orianka Kilcher), the Native American princess who saves the life of an English settler, Capt. John Smith (Colin Farrell), in the early 17th century. The film presents both vantage points of the clash that occurs between the two cultures when three small ships land in Chesapeake Bay in 1607. The English seafarers are as exotic to the Native Americans as the painted "naturals" are to the settlers. When a Native American tribe takes Smith prisoner, he is immersed in a new culture that is infused with nature. Later, after Pocahontas is shunned by her people, we experience the Jamestown settlement and then England through her eyes.

Lubezki first met Malick when the director was prepping a project about Che Guevara that eventually passed into other hands. "It was a script Terry had written about the last year of Guevara's life, and it was great," recalls the cinematographer. "When we met to discuss it, I gave him my ideas, and we talked about not lighting, not using heavy grip equipment, doing it with a handheld camera close to the action. Terry said, 'Man, you're crazy, but this is music to my ears.' After *Che* fell apart, he called me about



Photos courtesy of New Line Cinema.

Uncharted Emotions



Above: A tribesman eyes the approaching English ships. Below: A Giraffe crane mounted on a small floating platform was used to capture footage of the hero ships.

The New World. He outlined the story and said he wanted to shoot it exactly the way we had planned to shoot *Che*. He said, 'Are you up for it?' I said, 'Of course!'"

Malick and Lubezki subsequently developed a charter for the film, a list of rules that they called "Dogma" in playful reference to Dogme95, the Danish brand of cinematic Puritanism. "I shouldn't call it Dogma because everyone thinks we're talking about the other guys," says Lubezki. "This was our set of rules, but like many dogmas, it has some contradictions." The most important tenet was "resolution," which led the filmmakers to consider shooting in 65mm. (They eventually opted for anamorphic 35mm.) The rules excluded most of the cinematographer's standard tools. "We wanted to avoid lighting, dollies, tripods, cranes, high-speed work, long lenses, filters and CGI," says Lubezki.

"We didn't want any 'postcards,' pretty shots of sunsets. We also didn't want lens flares, which is a contradiction with anamorphic. The sun happens to be a very important character in the film, the most important force in nature, and we wanted to show it in relation to the characters, so we ended up breaking the flare rule many times. We all remember the beautiful crane shots John Toll [ASC] used in *The Thin Red Line*. When I told my key grip we were doing a movie with Terry Malick, he got very excited and said, 'Great! We can use this crane and …..'" Then I had to interrupt him and say, 'We're not bringing any gear. You're going to help me carry the camera and a bead board, and that's it.' He ended up working very hard." (Ultimately, a Giraffe crane *was* used on the production; it was mounted on a boat so the camera could reach up to the English ships.)

"The most important article for Terry was 'Article E — E for exception!' We could break any rule, and indeed, we broke them all, but we had these guiding ideas." Perhaps the most radical decision was not to use lighting. "That doesn't mean we didn't have lights," Lubezki confesses. "I had some just in case, but I didn't want Terry to see them. And, in keeping with 'Article E,' we used them for a couple of scenes — we had to or we couldn't have shot. But this is basically a sunlit movie. When we were shooting, we were extra-aware of how everything in nature is constantly shifting. We became aware of the earth moving, the shadows changing, the color temperature constantly shifting, the rivers changing color, and the tide shifting, and all of that happens really fast. When you're distracted, you don't notice those changes. Shooting studio movies, you tend to want to control the elements, but on this picture we didn't — we wanted to capture life. The moment we embraced life, we turned our backs on artificial light. I think the flow of nature became a theme of the movie."



Lubezki acknowledges that not using film lights was difficult at first. "We were going against my instincts, but after one or two weeks, I was sold on it. The problem with natural light is that it's chaotic. It's polluted with colors and bounces, and if the skies aren't cloudy it can distort a face or an object; people can look older or tired. When you light something with artificial light, even if it's just a chair, you're capturing an ideal shape of the chair. When you're lighting with the sun, shadows and colors are constantly changing the shape."

Contrast control is often the main problem for cinematographers shooting outside, and without the help of silks or fill lights, Lubezki had to resort to camera placement to solve the problem. "How can you balance a face with a background that is seven stops over key? Sometimes I asked Terry to set up a scene against some dark trees, but sometimes he wanted the river behind [the action], which meant the horizon and sky were very overexposed and the face was under. I have to say, the Kodak negative helped immensely because it has incredible latitude. You can't shoot a movie like this on HD [high-definition video] — not yet."

The New World's nonlinear structure created some lighting-continuity challenges for Lubezki and Jim Passon, who color-timed the final release prints at Deluxe Laboratories. (Film dailies were generated by Technicolor Los Angeles, where Lubezki worked with timer Art Tostado.) "With Terry, a close-up shot with sun in July might be paired with a scene shot at dusk in September," says the cinematographer. "I knew [lighting continuity] was going to be difficult because we would start a scene in the blazing sun, then 10 minutes later the skies would cloud over, then the sun would come out again, but we never stopped shooting. I trusted that Terry could solve the problem in the editing, but he had to use the best moment for the actors, whether it was in the sun or the shadows. Because we were shooting completely out of sequence, we decided to shoot in backlight as much as possible. You have a better chance of matching if the light is softer on the faces and has no real direction. You also have a better chance to match if you go from sunny backlight to an overcast shot."



There are few night scenes in *The New World*, a reflection, perhaps, of an era when people lived by the rhythm of the sun. In one such scene, Smith bids farewell to Pocahontas, principally lit by firelight. "We didn't want anything to feel artificial," says Lubezki. "They used oil lamps and fires in that period, and it was important not to betray that. I don't know if you can call what we did 'realism,' because once you frame something, you take it out of its natural context. I leave that to the critics. Perhaps what we were doing was naturalism."

After Smith is captured, he witnesses an indoor Native



Above: Anticipating the natives' resistance, Smith practices his swordsmanship. Below: Steadicam operator Jörg Widmer (left) captures a shot of Farrell on the fly, as B-camera 1st AC Darin Moran tracks the action. Larry McConkey also manned a Steadicam on the show.

Uncharted Emotions

Right: Sensing the good in Smith, Pocahontas convinces her people to spare his life. Below: The king takes the measure of Smith from his throne, which is bathed in a regal shaft of overhead light.



American ceremony that will decide his fate. Lubezki reveals that the lengthy sequence was lit by firelight, daylight and a few of today's tools. "Some of the shafts of light were too blue, so I [corrected them to] white," he says. "I was happier with the [results] than Terry was!" In another indoor scene, the size of the room, the number of characters in the scene and a thunderstorm outside forced Lubezki to create artificial daylight.

In designing the production, the filmmakers painstakingly reproduced the architecture, customs, clothing and artifacts of the time. The Jamestown settlement, the Algonquin village, and tools and weapons were all historically accurate, and a 3-acre field was even planted with corn and tobacco. The actors were thus placed in a setting that breathed authenticity. "Terry's method of shooting is so different from all the other directors I've worked with," notes Lubezki. "Sometimes he would block a scene with the actors very roughly, then he would allow them to just become those characters and improvise. We never put any marks on the floor. We just jumped in as though we were reporters — we called ourselves 'the 5 o'clock news team!' We tried to capture the accidents, the things you cannot plan, the moments that feel the most real. For Terry, that was more important than capturing a piece of dialogue. That made operating the camera tense but incredibly interesting. Sometimes we would get something and sometimes we wouldn't. Sometimes Terry would say, 'Pan right' or 'Go left,' and sometimes he would just let us go." ➢



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Smith attempts to keep his men focused by putting them to work on a hillside — a scene that presented some obvious difficulties for the crew.

The filmmakers took none of the usual pauses that punctuate a film set to put lighting in place, lay dolly track, or even reload a camera when a magazine ran low on unexposed film. A second camera was often standing by to relieve the A camera when its magazine ran out, allowing the filmmakers to shoot constantly. "Using natural light and no grip equipment, we were able to keep shooting and shooting, and that helped the actors become those characters," says Lubezki. "The only time we saw the actors being themselves was at lunch."

The New World's strong visual style is established in large part by extensive Steadicam work, which was shot by Jörg Widmer and Jim McConkey. "I like the Steadicam when it doesn't look mechanical," says Lubezki. "When you have the reference of walls, it can become a little mechanical, geometrical, but when you're in the woods or near the water, everything is changing and shifting, and I think you don't notice the Steadicam — at least, I was counting on that." Most of the Steadicam movement is from behind or in front of the characters, rarely from the side. The camera is often anchored to the character, "following the actor very closely," notes Widmer. "The strongest impact is [created] when you stay the same distance from the actor.



"This is a movie without short ends, which is very unusual," continues Widmer. "We always shot until we ran out, and there was always something to shoot. When we arrived at the end of the scene, we often didn't stop the action; the actors sometimes simply went back to the beginning or did something unexpected because they felt free to do so. I lost two mobile phones during the shoot because sometimes the actors went into the river and I followed them in! Terry was always on a search for the right moment, the right reaction. He was always searching and always open. The script was one thing, but looking for moments was the big priority. We were searching for unspoiled nature, for a new world."

The free-flowing style of the mise-en-scène is apparent in the fluid camerawork. The picture features almost no classic coverage; rather, the camera moves sometimes sweep like brushstrokes across the characters and landscape to create a kind of reverie. "Terry is very concerned about the sides of the frame changing constantly — he doesn't like to intercut between two shots,"



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Uncharted Emotions



The king and queen of England honor Pocahontas by granting her an audience in their unfamiliar and awe-inspiring land.

says Lubezki. "In general, he tries to go A-B-C, not A-B-A." Indeed, when a scene late in the film features standard coverage, alternating angles on Pocahontas and Smith, it has a disquieting effect that heightens the characters' awkwardness.

Malick's search for authenticity sometimes entailed finding the right performance over time. In the film, the courtship of Smith and Pocahontas unfolds in a series of simple vignettes. These pairings were filmed every weekend throughout the shoot "with a tiny unit," recalls Lubezki. "We shot that same sequence for the four or five months of production. It was all improvisation, and it really shows the growth of the characters' love." Widmer adds, "This was one of the most amazing shoots I've ever been on. Each actor found his place with a freedom they'd probably never felt before. Terry brought them into the mood, explained his ideas, and then let them go. It was very hard work; we started in the morning and ended in the evening without any of the usual interruptions. It was Steadicam or handheld all day until nightfall, except for the lunch break."

Most of the movie is shot in anamorphic, which uses more negative area than other 35mm formats. "Our initial dream was to shoot the entire movie in 65mm, but there were so many barriers," says Lubezki. "The only person who really supported us in that idea was Vittorio Storaro [ASC, AIC]," who had mixed 65mm and 35mm on *Little Buddha*. "I called him to talk it over, and he said, 'Chivo, don't even think about it. Shoot it all in 65!' But there are big problems with how to distribute 65 and postproduce sound



for it. No one projects it anymore." The filmmakers did shoot a small amount of 65mm "for what we called 'hyper-enhanced moments' —when, for example, John Smith or Pocahontas has an important realization."

Much of *The New World* was shot with 40mm and 50mm lenses very close to the actors, and Dan Sasaki, senior technical adviser at Panavision, crafted a custom set of close-focus anamorphic E- and C-Series primes for the production. "Phil Radin [Panavision's executive vice president of marketing] really got behind us, and Dan made special hybrid lenses that combined E and C technology and were close focus, because we wanted to get close to the characters without using long lenses," says Lubezki. "We didn't have enough time to test the lenses before taking them to the field, but we kept in very close communication with Dan, and by the first week of shooting we had a great set of lenses." Malick wanted "as deep a focus as possible, so I was trying to shoot everything at T11 and T16. The lenses are not as good at those deep stops, but Terry really wanted the depth, so I tried my best. It was a bit of a circus act." Focusing at a very short distance greatly reduces depth of field, and even with Lubezki's small aperture, the backgrounds in *The New World* are sometimes a bit soft, heightening the subjective nature of the story. Lubezki used Kodak Vision2 500T 5218 to achieve his deep stops, and he used Vision2 200T 5217 when light levels allowed.

Reflecting on this memorable shoot, Lubezki muses, "Terry created a mood that made us like fishermen, trying to catch fish in the water, moments in the flow of events around us as they were moving and changing. When you're filming, you often develop little secrets that help you find a visual style, and our secret idea was the flow of time and life. We were trying to find that in everything around us — in nature, in the change of the seasons, and in the actors' moments. There is poetry in all the variations." ■

TECHNICAL SPECS

Anamorphic 2.40:1
35mm and 65mm

Panaflex Platinum, Millennium XL; PanAaton 35-III; Panavision 65mm

E-Series, C-Series and 65mm lenses

Kodak Vision2 200T 5217, Vision2 500T 5218

Printed on Fuji F-CP 3513DI



Peaks and Valleys



Brokeback Mountain, shot by Rodrigo Prieto, ASC, AMC, traces the emotional arc of an impassioned relationship between two cowboys.

by John Calhoun

Unit photography by Kimberley French

The two protagonists of *Brokeback Mountain* are in many ways classic American cowboys — strong, silent types. As director of photography Rodrigo Prieto, ASC, AMC puts it, "When they talk, they don't adorn what they say with fancy words; they're direct. [Director] Ang Lee and I felt the camerawork had to be like that as well. Ang said he wanted to shoot it very much like the characters are: very stoic in a way, and simple."

Lee says it was Prieto's virtuosic work on Alejandro González Iñárritu's films *Amores Perros* (see *AC* April '01) and *21 Grams* (*AC* Dec. '03) that caught his eye. "We met and talked about *Brokeback Mountain*, and I felt the talent there, and the energy," says Lee. "And then I asked Rodrigo to [work in a style] that was quite the opposite of why people want him." Yet the visual simplicity Lee proposed appealed to Prieto, who was nearing completion on Oliver Stone's *Alexander* (*AC* Nov. '04) when he got the script. "*Brokeback Mountain* was the



Opposite: Jack (Jake Gyllenhaal, left) and Ennis (Heath Ledger) hit it off while tending sheep in the wilds of Wyoming in 1963. This page, left: Running short on supplies, the men eye a potential food source. Below: Director of photography Rodrigo Prieto, ASC, AMC takes a reading on location in Alberta, Canada.

antithesis of the extremes of *Alexander*, which had many different visual styles, many cameras, big lighting setups and many characters in every scene. This was a complete 180, and that's one of the things that attracted me to it, as I enjoy looking for new challenges with each project."

Another thing that made the film attractive to Prieto was its unusual subject matter: what makes main characters Jack Twist (Jake Gyllenhaal) and Ennis Del Mar (Heath Ledger) *atypical* cowboys are their romantic and sexual inclinations, which are directed toward each other. Adapted from a short story by Annie Proulx, *Brokeback Mountain* is a rarity in American cinema: a tragic tale of thwarted romance between two characters of the same sex. The story opens in 1963, as Jack and Ennis meet while tending sheep on the titular Wyoming peak. It goes on to cover the next 20 years of their lives, as the men marry and establish families but periodically reconnect. Throughout the relationship, they attempt to recapture that initial moment of happiness symbolized by Brokeback Mountain, but are held back by social restraints and fear. "I think every once in awhile, we need something fresh to tell the oldest story, in this case a romantic love story," says Lee. "It's harder and harder to find obstacles for romance." Prieto adds, "When I read it, I knew I had to participate in it. This is the 21st century, and there's still quite a bit of intolerance toward homosexuality. This script really makes you feel empathy for these characters."

Lee reveals another reason he wanted Prieto for the job: the cinematographer is known for getting dazzling results with limited time and money. "This was a very low-budget film, but it's not written like one," Lee says of the story, which spans two decades and encompasses several distinct settings. "I needed



Photos courtesy of Focus Features.

Peaks and Valleys



The crew prepares to film a closer shot of Ledger (on horseback, left). A naturalistic look was the filmmakers' goal, and Prieto used four film stocks and varied his framing and filtration to underscore the story's emotional nuances.

someone who uses natural light smartly, who sets out the shots without changing them and gives most of the time to the actors." Just as important, he adds, "I needed someone like myself, with fresh eyes for the American West."

For inspiration, Lee, Prieto, production designer Judy Becker and other key crew studied a number of visual references during prep, including Richard Avedon's *In the American West* book of portraits and William Eggleston's stills. The latter interested Prieto because of the "limited color palette and sometimes strange but simple compositions." The lighting and compositional styles of painters Edward Hopper and Andrew Wyeth were also influential. Lee was drawn to Ansel Adams' classic photography of small Western towns in which "the frame is kind of off, with a lot of things on the sides and a lot of contrast."

"Ang is very specific about framing and lens choice," says Prieto, who has shot movies for Julie Taymor, Curtis Hanson and Spike Lee, among others. "He'd ask for a specific lens, look through the director's viewfinder, and then we'd mark where he was. Ang has a great eye, and he meticulously looks for the angle that best tells the story." The director's eye was apparent to Prieto during testing. The cinematographer's plan was to "do things that were very subtle in terms of film stocks, framing and filtration — things that I hoped wouldn't be noticeable but would make a difference. Ang is very keen on those subtleties, and he noticed every little thing: the grain texture of one stock versus another, or the subtle difference between a Zeiss Ultra Prime lens and a Cooke S4. I presented him with options, and he had very specific opinions."

Selecting the proper lenses for the picture required a collaborative attention to detail. "Ang originally wanted to use Cooke Panchros because he wanted a softer image," recalls Prieto. "He didn't want something really hard-edged and stark. I usually use Ultra Primes because I like high contrast and very, very sharp images, so we did side-by-side comparisons of Ultra Primes, Panchros and Cooke S4 primes. We concluded that our best bet was the S4s; they have a wider gamut of lenses than the Panchros, and they match better from one lens to another. The S4s also felt a tiny, tiny bit less harsh and a touch warmer than the Ultra Primes. It was hard to see — we had to A-B project them over and over! If we needed a little extra softness, we used a bit of diffusion." For example, scenes late in the film involving Jack's wife (Anne Hathaway), a heavily made-up Texas woman, were shot with Schneider Classic Soft filters.

Elaborating on his use of lenses, Prieto continues, "We were mostly staying on the wide end, but I wouldn't say wide angle. We wouldn't use the 14mm, but we did use the 27mm, the 32mm, and the 40mm and 50mm. I like the way a 40 or 50mm feels on a close-up — it looks more intimate, as the camera is physically close to the actor." He shot the picture with the Arricam system, using the lightweight LT as his A camera. "Peter Wunstorf [ASC,

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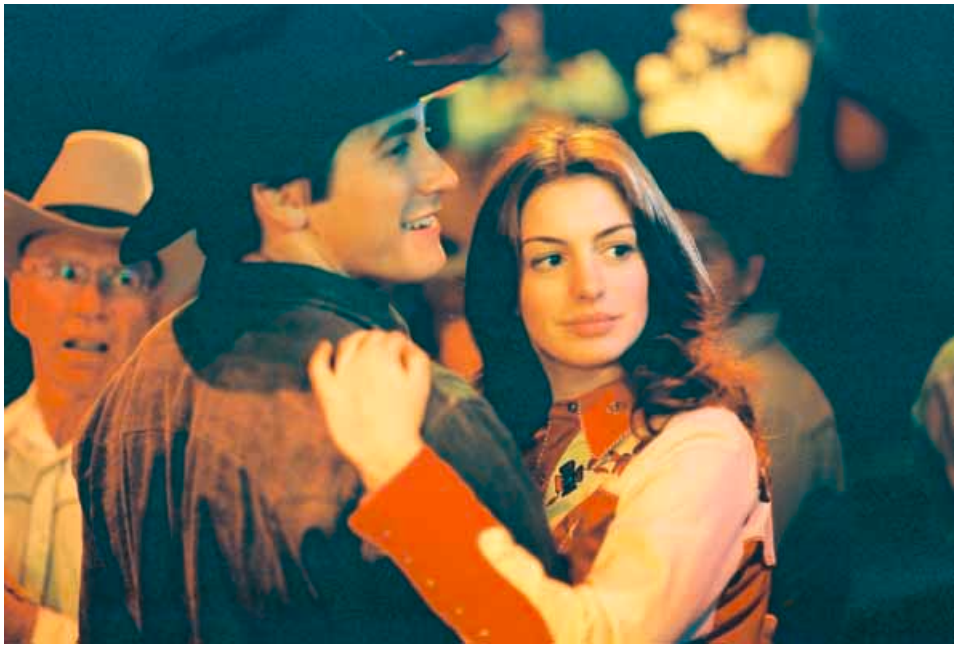
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Peaks and Valleys



Despite their love for each other, both Jack and Ennis get married and raise families. Jack weds Lureen (Anne Hathaway, above), a privileged Texan, and Ennis marries longtime sweetheart Alma (Michelle Williams, below).

CSC], who shot second unit, would take the ST into the mountains," he says. With a chuckle, he adds, "Peter did all the shots people will remember as being the photography in the movie!" Wunstorf had very precise guidance, however: "When we scouted the mountains, I took stills of everything," says Prieto. "When we printed the stills, Ang would draw on top and say, 'Frame it like this.' Peter and I would then discuss the ideal time to shoot for the light on the peaks."

Choosing film stocks was even more complex than choosing lenses, because the filmmakers wanted to establish a subtle visual distinction between the early scenes of Jack and Ennis on Brokeback Mountain and most of what follows. Lee explains, "I didn't want to divide it in terms of 'The days on the mountain are great, and off the mountain sucks.' But I knew the mountains should be romantically photographed. That's why the film is called *Brokeback Mountain* — everybody has a Brokeback Mountain, a yearning for romance or the illusion of romance. When Jack and Ennis are off the mountain, they want to go back but are never really able to. The landscape gets drier and drier as we go along and gradually becomes a backdrop." In the towns, the framing often includes the sky; in addition to the story's intimate scale, this emphasis on the mountains' vertical scope is why the filmmakers decided to shoot in standard 1.85:1.

"We wanted to visually separate the men's everyday lives in Wyoming, where Ennis lives, and Texas, where Jack lives, from their experiences on Brokeback Mountain," says Prieto. "For day-exterior mountain scenes, I used [Eastman EXR 50D] 5245 because I wanted those images to feel a little crisper and cleaner — I wanted the air to be more transparent." Daylight scenes down in the towns were filmed on Kodak Vision 250D 5246 to achieve "a touch more grain and a touch more contrast," he continues. "Judy Becker's production design featured muted colors, and we wanted [the town] to feel a little grayer, a little harsher than the mountain scenes." He also used 5246 for dusk and dawn scenes on the mountain, when he needed more speed.

When Jack and Ennis rendezvous on the mountain in subsequent years, the stock is once again 45 — until the men begin to argue over their relationship. "When things get a little ugly, I go to 46. Throughout the picture, 45 is the stock for when things are good." Prieto used Vision2 500T 5218 for all night material except the sequences set in Texas; there, he used Vision 500T 5279. "I find 79 a little more saturated and contrasty than 5218, and I wanted brighter reds and a little more color in Texas."

Most of the picture was shot



in the Canadian province of Alberta, and the 10-week shoot was subject to all the predictable difficulties of practical locations and high-plains weather. "Ang talked a lot about the type of weather and time of year he wanted throughout the story," says Prieto. "I broke the script down scene by scene, listing the film stock and special equipment I wanted to use, as well as notes about weather, time of day, mood of lighting, and specifics about color. We tried to stick to it, but [this kind of shoot] is never what you want weather-wise — the skies in Alberta are full of huge clouds and the sun comes in and out all the time, which is every cinematographer's nightmare. The movie depends so much on exteriors, and we knew we weren't going to finish with a digital intermediate [DI], so we just waited for the light."

Or they did their best to fake it. "We had to shoot one long dialogue scene that was set at dusk in the middle of the day. I created a fire effect on the actors' faces that was really, really bright to compete with the daylight in the background. I used an 81D filter plus heavy NDs on the lens so the background would look slightly blue and soft-focus, as though the day was about to end. We blocked the daylight from the actors with a black 12-by-12 overhead frame, and I brought up the exposure of the firelight effect on their faces to the same level as the background daylight, then underexposed everything to make it feel like dusk."

Night exteriors were an even bigger challenge, especially outside the artificially lit towns. "It's easy to bring in a Musco for moonlight, but I'm a little obsessed with making [nighttime ambient light] really look like it's moonlight or firelight," says Prieto. "The trick was finding a way to do that without a big budget." Several key sequences early in the film find Jack and Ennis getting





Peaks and Valleys



Right: Director Ang Lee gives Ledger some last-minute guidance as Prieto prepares to film in a local supermarket. Below: Lee checks a shot as Prieto looks on. "Ang is very specific about framing and lens choice," says the cinematographer, "and he has a great eye."

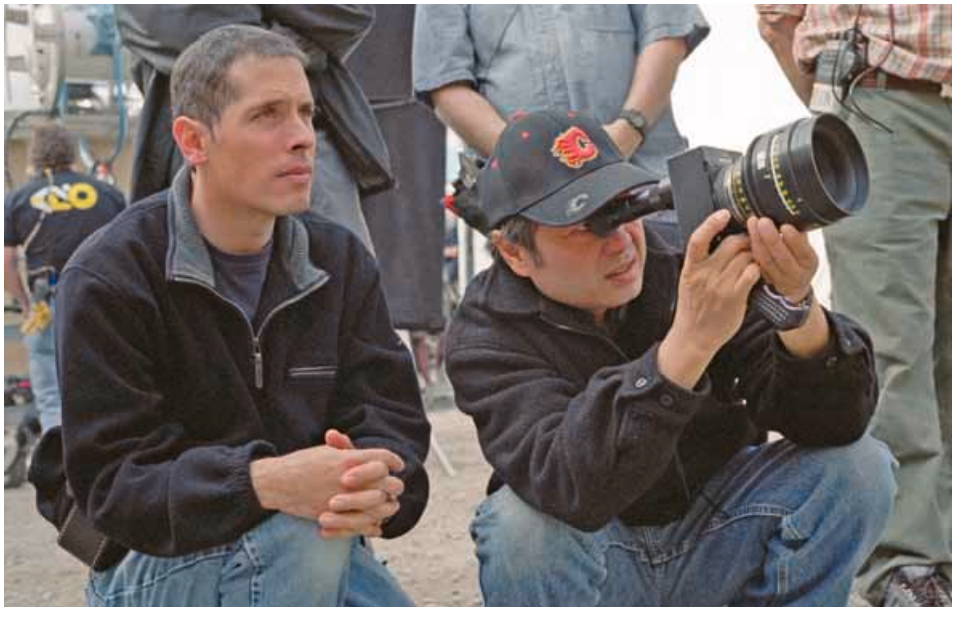
to know each other by firelight or, in one crucial case, only the moon. "The problem with moonlit scenes in the countryside is that the moon will light to infinity, so if your eye can see the mountains in the distance, they should be moonlit as well. We had to find locations [to set the action] that were a little bit enclosed, with trees or a little hill — something that would block the view of the far distance.

"We couldn't afford to create moonlight with helium lighting balloons, so my gaffer, Christopher Porter, brought in weather balloons, and we bounced light off those," he continues. "We had rigging electrics climb 40 or 50 feet up in the trees and tie up 12K and 6K HMI Pars to blast the balloons, and that was our moonlight fill. We gelled the lights with ½ CTO and ¼ Plus Green so the light wouldn't have any real color to it. On wider shots, we used three or four weather balloons and I underexposed the footage."

In one scene, Jack is lit by the campfire and Ennis is seen approaching from a 50-yard distance, lit only by the moon. "I was underexposing the moonlight by about two stops, whereas Jack by the firelight was on key. I wanted you to be able to see Ennis, but just barely." For firelight, Prieto used 8'-long wood batten strips with 100-watt household bulbs attached every 6" or so. "We used Socapex connectors and had the bulbs going off in different rhythms to create a shimmering, flickering effect," he says. "It's a big, soft source with many, many bulbs, and we dimmed them way down to create an orange glow."

In another scene, when Jack invites a shivering Ennis inside the tent, the campfire has gone out. This scene was shot in two sections. The first part is an exterior location that was chosen partly because of its proximity to a hill. "In that case," says Prieto, "I had a 24-lamp Dino gelled with ½ CTB and ¼ Plus Green way, way off on a 100-foot Condor. That barely gave me an exposure of T1.4. Our lens was T2, so it was underexposed by a stop. Then we had our balloons filling out the foreground a little. I wanted all this to look like a single source, so we positioned the balloons so their illumination would seem to continue the light from the Dino."

The portion of the sequence that unfolds inside the tent was shot on a small stage in Calgary, and it was no less tricky to illuminate. "Those tents are made of thick canvas, so when you go inside and close the opening, there's no light," says Prieto. "We had to be able to see inside, yet the illumination had to feel natural — I couldn't have high contrast, because where was the source?" He created soft ambient light in the tent by directing Kino Flos and 2K Fresnels through the canvas. "I had to add more blue to the [moonlight] gel pack because the canvas was quite warm; we used Full CTB instead of ½ CTB." The scene was underexposed by 1½ stops "and printed down even further — we wanted to see the faces, but barely. It was kind of scary to work in such low light, but I thought it would also help the actors; I want-





After driving from Texas to Wyoming on the spur of the moment, Jack discovers that Ennis has weekend plans with his children.

ed Jake and Heath to be in a dark environment in the tent to help with the intimacy of the scene."

The only other set the production built onstage was a motel room where Jack and Ennis have their first rendezvous after a separation of several years. Otherwise, practical locations around Calgary were used. "It's always a challenge to work in tight spaces, but I really do feel it helps," says Prieto. "When you're limited by reality the lighting feels more realistic, because that's the way light behaves naturally. When you're onstage and can move a wall out or put a light through at any point, it can look good, but it's fake. This applies to camera positions as well. Even for the tent scene, where we took one side of the tent out so we could fit the camera through, we made sure the lens was inside — we were right in there with a 32mm. In the motel room, we took a wall out, but again, the camera was inside, where the wall would have been.

"We were trying to base everything on reality, with light sources that made sense but also helped create the mood we wanted for each scene. That meant working very closely with Judy [Becker] on light sources, be they windows or streetlights or lamps." Of course, that's not to say subtle stylization wasn't at work with the lighting. At night, when Jack and Ennis are shown apart, Prieto created a slight color separation with lighting. Night exteriors with Ennis, the more tortured character, "had a little more blue influence," he explains. "I generally used Steel Green gel on the streetlights to make them feel more like mercury vapor or metal halide. For Jack's world in Texas, I either used straight tungsten white light or introduced a bit of warmth, an amber color that suggested [the sources] were sodium vapor. Jack is a little more energetic; he has a little more vibration."

That vibration is nowhere to be seen during a scene late in the movie, when Ennis visits Jack's parents. Their farmhouse is "very stark, with grayish-white walls," says Prieto. "I tried to do something very simple but with a powerful contrast, which is difficult to achieve in a white room, so I blew out the windows and made them bright spots while keeping dark shadows on the faces. For this scene, we were inspired by the work of Vilhelm Hammershoi, whose paintings are very moody but devoid of color. We used one 18K HMI as the main source, lighting from a large window next to the table where Jack's father talks with Ennis. The light was diffused with a 12-by-12 full grid that was as close to the window as the framing allowed in each shot. We had two 6K Pars over the smaller windows coming in as direct sunlight through the sheer curtains, and a 4K Par through the small window in the door. For close-ups, I added an Image 80 on the ground to give a sense of light bouncing off the floor, plus a single 2-foot Kino tube wrapped in 216 under the lens for a very slight glint in the eyes. The goal was to suggest that Ennis feels uncomfortable in the stale, monochromatic atmosphere."

Throughout *Brokeback Mountain*, the camerawork is possibly the simplest visual element. "Most of the time we were shooting

Peaks and Valleys



Unable to afford lighting balloons, the production bounced light off weather balloons to create ambient moonlight. In this scene, they used the technique to simulate out-of-frame 4th of July fireworks, bouncing 10Ks with colored gels off the balloons during shots of the actors.

with one camera," says Prieto. "Sometimes Damon Moreau was operating, and sometimes I was." Lee marvels at Prieto's facility in this role. "I've never worked with a better operator," says the director. "Rodrigo breathes with the scene — the framing goes along with what's happening, it goes with the flow, whether the camera is on sticks or handheld." Actually, according to Prieto, there's only one handheld shot in the movie, during a fight scene between the two men. Dolly shots were nearly as scarce, and cranes were non-existent. "There was a temptation sometimes to do a nice camera move," says Prieto, "but the story didn't need it."

One of the picture's rare Steadicam shots finds Jack prowling among the male prostitutes on a back street in Mexico. The companion he chooses is played by none other than Prieto. "I was starting to light the scene, and Ang said he wanted to ask a big favor," recalls the cinematographer. (Lee, who explains that the actor originally cast turned out to be too short, notes, "Rodrigo will do anything for a director, including putting himself in a dark alley!") Prieto continues, "They whisked me off to hair and makeup and wardrobe, and God, it was horrible. The worst part was, it was a complicated lighting setup. The camera starts with Jack going down one street that was lit with



tungsten units gelled with ¼ CTO, and then turns onto a street where all the prostitutes are. I wanted to transition into something seedier there, so I went to mercury vapor; the light changes from a warmish hue to blue-green with some yellow and red spots coming out of doorways. The camera was seeing in 360 degrees, so I had to contain all the sources within the buildings or overhead and had very little time to do it — and on top of that, I had to endure makeup and hair!"

Prieto color-timed *Brokeback Mountain* at Deluxe Toronto, right after he finished supervising a three-month DI for *Alexander* in Paris. "Ang's belief is that DIs look like DIs, that there is a certain texture he didn't want," says the cinematographer. "I don't totally agree with that because I think it depends on how you use [the technology] — *8 Mile* was a DI, but I don't think it looks like it. But in this case, I thought it was appropriate not to do a DI; the philosophy of the movie was simplicity, so I thought we should make it the old-fashioned way. I also didn't feel we needed the enhanced control of the digital suite, because most of the time we'd been able to wait out the weather."

Finishing the picture photochemically affected Prieto's choice of print stock. "We wanted good, deep blacks, but we also didn't want the image to be too colorful. We tested [Kodak] Vision and felt the blacks weren't deep enough. Then we tested [Kodak] Vision Premier, and although we liked the blacks, it was just too colorful overall." Instead, Prieto printed on Fuji 3513 DI, which has "good blacks and less saturated color. The one thing we lost a bit of was the saturation of the foliage; we could have gotten that with Premier, but then the reds would have been too saturated as well."

Summing up his work on the picture, Prieto says, "I only hope the cinematography helps tell this story of deep human emotions that touch everyone, regardless of nationality, religion, politics or sexual orientation." ■

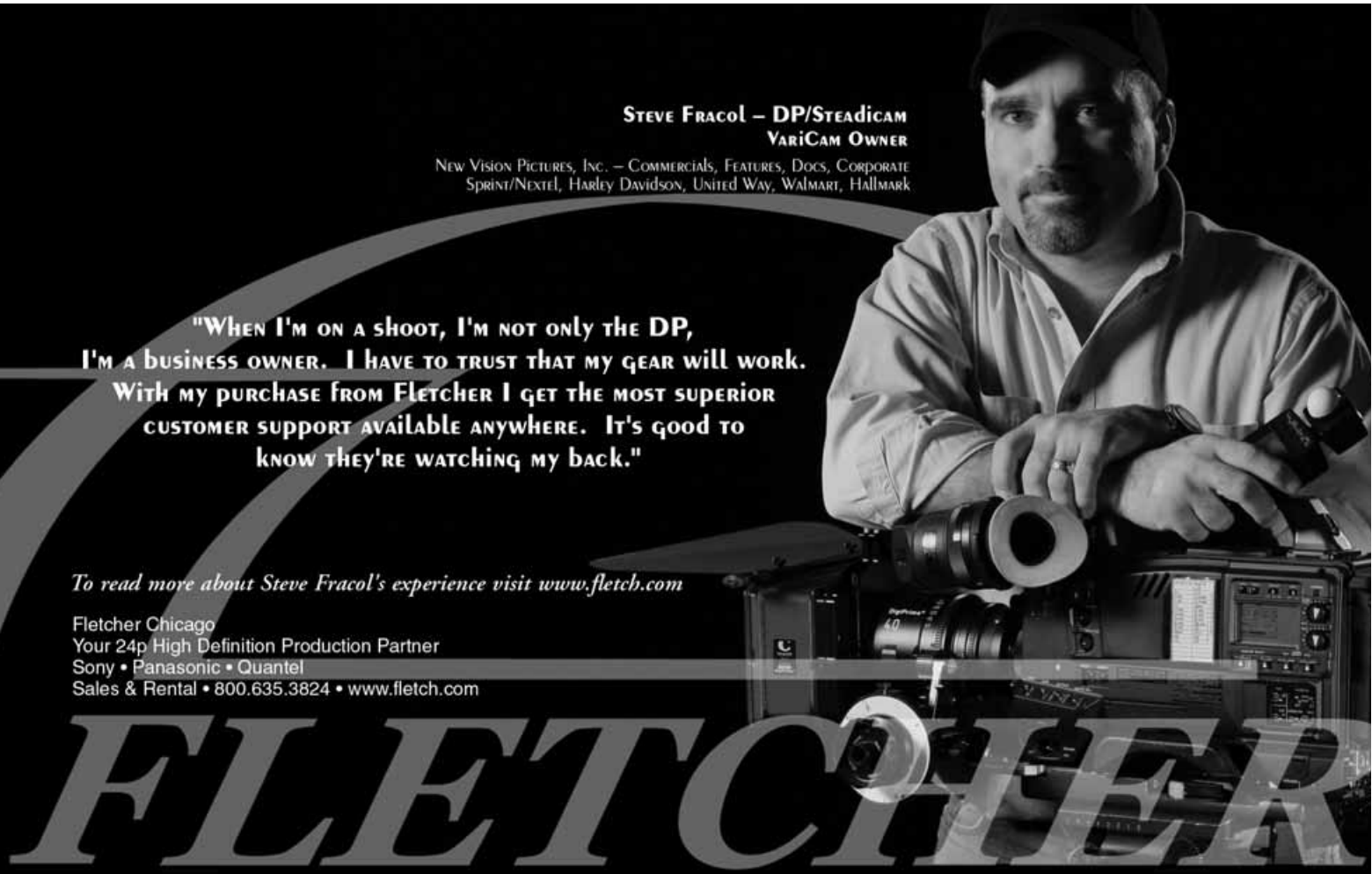
TECHNICAL SPECS

1.85:1

Arricam ST, LT
Cooke S4 lenses

Eastman EXR 50D 5245,
Kodak Vision 250D 5246,
Vision 500T 5279,
Vision2 500T 5218

Printed on Fuji F-CP 3513DI



A Legacy Rewarded

Richard H. Kline, ASC is honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award for a diverse career of impressive imagery.

by David E. Williams



"There are so many great faces up on those walls, so much history," says director of photography Richard H. Kline, ASC, gazing wistfully at a display of black-and-white portraits depicting past and present members of the American Society of Cinematographers. Pondering this "wall of fame" at the organization's Hollywood Clubhouse, he points out images of Burnett Guffey, James Wong Howe, Philip Lathrop and other exceptional talents. "I was very lucky to have worked with them and so many others as an assistant and operator. While they probably didn't know it, they were my teachers, my mentors. I never had any formal training as a cinematographer, but I learned so much from just being in their presence."

Kline assisted and operated on more than 200 motion pictures before becoming a director of photography in 1963, after which he compiled 46 feature credits. He is a product of the Hollywood studio-system heyday of the 1940s, '50s and '60s, an invaluable link to a time when filmmakers could focus almost exclusively on practicing their craft and improving with each picture.

As a cinematographer, Kline earned Academy Award nominations for the lavish 1968 musical *Camelot* and the 1976 remake of the epic *King Kong.* His other credits include *Hang 'em High, The Boston Strangler, The Andromeda Strain, The Mechanic, Soylent Green, Battle for the Planet of the Apes, Mr. Majestyk, The Fury, Who'll Stop the Rain, Star Trek — The Motion Picture, Breathless, Body Heat, All of Me* and *The Competition.*

Standing in the ASC Clubhouse, Kline points to a portrait of pioneering cameraman Philip Rosen, who co-founded the ASC in 1919 and became its first president. "He was my uncle, you know," he says with pride. "I'm actually the fourth member of my family to be a part of the ASC. My father, Benjamin, was a member, and my other uncle, Sol Halperin, was also a president. I guess you could say I was genetically predestined to become a cameraman."

Given Kline's dedication to his craft and commensurate success, he seemed equally destined to be honored with the ASC Lifetime Achievement Award, which is presented annually to an individual who has made exceptional and enduring contributions to the art of filmmaking. He will receive the award during the 20th annual ASC Outstanding Achievement Awards

on February 26.

Kline notes that his first memory of being on a film set was at the age of 7. His father's long career behind the camera comprised more than 350 credits, many of them eight-day-wonder Westerns for the likes of Charlie "The Durango Kid" Starrett, Tex Ritter and Buck Jones. Asked if he was inspired to follow in his father's footsteps at a young age, Kline replies, "Not in the way you might think. He was away from home working on location quite a bit while I was growing up, and I had different interests. I was much more interested in surfing, which I've done all my life. But after I graduated from high school in 1943, my father got me into the camera department at Columbia Pictures."

With World War II raging, the elder Kline reasoned that the experience could qualify his son to work on a camera unit when he entered the service. The 16-year-old lad started out as a slate boy for Rudolph Maté, ASC on *Cover Girl,* which showcased Rita Hayworth and Gene Kelly in elaborate dance routines. "I quickly learned what great technicians we had on the set," says Kline. "It was a different time back then. We didn't have crab dollies, handheld cameras or the sophisticated lighting units and grip equipment that we have today, but we learned efficiency. And our directors were extremely efficient specialists who could get 100 setups a day. There was no wasted time, and there was often a card game happening under the tripod between shots!"

Kline quickly advanced to first assistant cameraman and worked on other films before he entered the U.S. Navy in 1944. He was stationed at the Photo Science Laboratory in Washington, D.C., before shipping out to the Pacific theater, where he stayed until mid-1946. After returning to the States, he began working as an assistant at Columbia on every genre of film and with an array of directors and cinematographers. His first assignment upon his return became one of his most memorable: assisting Charles Lawton Jr., ASC during the shooting of Orson Welles' *The Lady From Shanghai.* "We were on location down in Acapulco and it was a very wild time," he recounts. "Errol Flynn lent his yacht to Orson for the film, and since Errol wasn't working at the time, he served as the skipper. Welles was brilliant, and here I was, this kid along for the ride."

Like his father, Kline worked on a lot of Westerns. "We shot many of them just outside of L.A., around Chatsworth and what is now Forest Lawn Cemetery. Our exterior work was all lit with reflectors on some scaffolding; we didn't have generators or lights. We'd constantly recycle locations, and we knew the area so well that we could coordinate the shoot to take best advantage of the daylight. For instance, there was what we called 'Panic Peak,' a bluff that was high enough that we could get in an extra hour of shooting before the sun went down. We never used natural sets; interiors were all done in the studio.

"We were constantly working. When your picture finished, you were moved on to another. Between features, I often worked on shorts for the Three Stooges. They were terrific fellows. Jules White was the main director, and what was really funny was his seriousness as a director — one would think he was directing Shakespeare."

Among Kline's many on-set mentors was Burnett Guffey. "I first worked with him at Columbia, when he was an operator, starting with *Cover Girl,* and we worked together for many years after he became a cinematographer. He had a formula to his lighting that I learned to duplicate exactly — I learned to duplicate the lighting of most of the cinematographers I worked with, though I could never quite figure out Jimmy Wong Howe.





Opposite page: Richard H. Kline, ASC (right) and director Michael O'Herlihy check out the day's selection of cynex strips while shooting an episode of the TV series *Mr. Novak.* This page, above: Kline (standing on platform) on location in Acapulco with director Orson Welles (crouching) during filming of *The Lady From Shanghai.* Left, actor Cornel Wilde (center) helps out the youthful assistant cameraman by pulling tape on costar Ron Randall during the making of the comedy *It Had to Be You.*

Photos courtesy of Richard H. Kline.

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Right: For *Camelot* (1967), Kline harnessed the light of 1,000 candles to lend a magical ambience to the wedding of King Arthur (Richard Harris) and Guenevere (Vanessa Redgrave) — using a hint of filtration to further spread the amber glow of the wicks. Below: Kline shares a lighter moment with director Joshua Logan during the production.

He was more instinctive, whereas Burnie knew what he wanted from the beginning. But I developed my own approach that was a combination of those two [philosophies]. It was instinctive — based on the needs of the story and the scene — but there were things I would naturally start out with. For instance, in lighting a particular room, I'd always start with the windows as my source and then marry the rest [of my approach] to them. You have to start with the basics and then see where they lead."

Kline decided to take advantage of the G.I. Bill to study fine arts and art history at the Sorbonne. He explains, "The camera union wouldn't let me work anymore because television had arrived and I had lower seniority, so I couldn't get a job unless everybody was working. I scrounged around in television for a few months. I was actually kept pretty busy at Desilu, working on *I Love Lucy* with Karl "Poppy" Freund [ASC], who was a colorful and talented character. I had worked with Lucille Ball on her last picture at Columbia, *The Magic Carpet,* and she was very nice to me. *Lucy* was a very well-coordinated show, the first to be shot with multiple cameras and a live audience."



In 1951, Kline returned to Hollywood after union regulations changed and he was able to work again. He picked up where he had left off at Columbia, as an assistant, and then spent more than a decade as an operator, manning the camera on such pictures as *A Raisin in the Sun, Around the World in 80 Days* and *The Birdman of Alcatraz.*

Kline became a cinematographer in 1963, following a brief, false start. He explains, "While I was in Rome, operating on the first *Pink Panther* movie for Phil Lathrop, I got a telegram from John Frankenheimer. We'd worked together on *Birdman of Alcatraz,* which Burnie Guffey had shot. The telegram read, 'Want you as my cinematographer. Repeat CINEMATOGRAPHER. Contact me immediately.' I thought, 'Is he crazy? He wants *me*?' Well, I called him at Goldwyn Studios, and he wanted me to shoot *Seven Days in May,* a movie about the Cuban missile crisis. Unfortunately, that didn't work out, but a few days later I got a call from Ray Johnson, the head of the camera department at MGM, where I had never worked. A producer there, William Froug, had a pilot for a TV show called *Mr. Novak.* He screened it for me and I thought it was quite good. We talked, and he asked if I'd like to photograph the show. I laughed and explained that I'd just gone through a bad experience, but he said, 'All you have to do is say yes and the job is yours.' I started prepping the next day."

Kline later learned that Froug had separately questioned three of his favorite TV directors — Lamont Johnson, Boris Segal and Richard Donner — about who he could promote to cinematographer on *Mr. Novak.* Each had named Kline. "It was a terrific compliment, and that changed my life. I was in the right place at the right time."

After two seasons on *Mr. Novak,* Kline shot several other TV pilots, including the 1966 debut of *The Monkees.* One of these pilots actually became his feature debut. "It didn't sell, so we did a few weeks of additional shooting, and it was released by Warners as *Chamber of Horrors,*" Kline says. "It wasn't the most auspicious debut."

Fate intervened yet again when a visitor to the set of *Horrors* asked Kline if he could spare a

moment to chat about a project that would soon start shooting on the Warners lot. "It turned out to be director Joshua Logan," says Kline. "After meeting with him the next day, I got the job of shooting *Camelot*."

Based on the hit Broadway musical, *Camelot* was shot on location in Spain and on expansive sets built on the Warner Bros. lot. The picture would be one of Kline's greatest challenges. "It was the scope of it that was overwhelming at times. I had certainly been on big sets before, but now it was all my responsibility. Our winter forest set, built on Stage 8, was immense. I had more than 400 10Ks in there."

However, Kline's reliance on mere candlelight for the film's soft-lit wedding between Arthur (Richard Harris) and Guenevere (Vanessa Redgrave) proved equally tricky, in part because the producers "didn't believe real candles would actually read on film," Kline recounts with a laugh. "I did a few tests and proved that point easily enough, but we also needed more than 1,000 candles for the scene. The actors were supposed to walk through darkness, surrounded by all these candles, before kneeling and taking their vows. Well, how were we going to light them all before the first ones burned out?"

The solution was to employ a team of 30 prop men to simultaneously light the candles, while Kline doubled the wicks' effectiveness by placing mirrors in strategic positions around the set. To add a mystical glow to the proceedings, he placed an 8'x8' pane of glass in front of the camera at a 30-degree angle. Then, behind the camera, he beamed light onto a 20'x20' white flat, which was reflected by the glass into the lens. Onscreen, shot through the glass, the royal couple seemed to pass through a warm aura of mysterious illumination that was softened even more by a hint of gauze diffusion.



Standing in his usual spot beside the camera, the cinematographer employs his "Kline Light" during the filming of *Camelot*. Using his hand or a gobo to shape the illumination, he would direct the small unit to add a touch of fill or lend a lively twinkle to the actors' eyes.

Kline controlled colors and contrast on the picture by pre-flashing his negative, a technique he had heard about but never used. Because the process opened up the shadows slightly, he used far less fill than usual. Pre-flashing also muted the colors a bit, lending the realm of Camelot a burnished, more naturalistic look. "Josh Logan didn't want a fantasy picture," notes Kline. "He didn't want the audience distanced from the story or characters that way."

Soon Kline would enter a far more "real" world for *The Boston Strangler,* based on the gripping story of notorious serial killer Albert DeSalvo. Directed by Richard Fleischer, the picture proved to be a visual feast, particularly in its inventive and influential use of split-screen, multiple-image storytelling. Fleischer had seen the split-screen technique used in Czechoslovakia in the 1940s and had long sought a project that would benefit from this device. *The Boston Strangler,* which tracks the killer (Tony Curtis) and his main pursuer, Detective John Bottomly (Henry Fonda), presented the ideal vehicle. The resultant film is less of a standard mystery than an intricate procedural, as key moments play out simultaneously onscreen, often with suspenseful and horrific results.

Working from a blueprint of puzzle-like panels plotted out by visual designer Fred Harpman, Kline's task was multifaceted: he was required to not only render each panel — they would later be combined through optical printing by L.B. Abbott, ASC — but also extend the motif into his own compositions. "Panavision's anamorphic format was a great aid in shooting the multiple-image sequences, not only because of the widescreen configuration, but also because of the sophisticated equipment that was available, especially the zoom lenses," Kline wrote in *American Cinematographer* shortly after the production wrapped. "We primarily used a short Panafocal zoom and a 50-500mm Angenieux, with the occasional use of a 35mm for wide-angle shots and a macro to get in close for some of the inserts."

Shooting at real locations in Boston proved tricky as well. "We couldn't possibly use a dolly, so we often used a zoom in its place. In order to light the cramped locations, I eliminated big lights. We employed quartz lamps and incandescents, using low-key source lighting almost exclusively." Given that his lenses needed a minimum f-stop of 4.5, this approach compelled Kline to force-process all of his footage by 1 stop.

Each element for the film's visual mosaic was shot actual size, meaning it was photographed 1:1 in

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Above: *The Boston Strangler* (1968) offered Kline a series of creative challenges and opportunities. Here, Detective Bottomly (Henry Fonda) interrogates suspect Albert DeSalvo (Tony Curtis). Below left: Kline (center) surveys the streets of Beantown with director Richard Fleischer (holding megaphone). Below right: Kline shares a mirthful moment with Curtis.

relation to how it would appear onscreen. Therefore, no optical magnification or reduction that would affect the grain structure of the image was required. Kline generally framed each image "dead center" in his viewfinder, thereby using the best portion of the lens, and only lit what would actually be used, allowing the rest of the frame to drop off into darkness. "This caused a certain amount of consternation back at the studio," he wrote in *AC*. "People watching our dailies would say, 'My God, the scene's too dark,' not taking into account that the only portion of the shot we were going to use would be a relatively well-lit doorknob in the center of the frame."

For scenes in which moments of simultaneous action would be presented onscreen from different angles, Kline used multiple cameras, sometimes as many as five, to gather the necessary elements. "This took a bit of care in the lighting, for you'd have five shots that would have to go into one frame of finished film side by side. Color values and density values became very important, because if one of the five images was lit more brightly than the others, or had more vivid color, your eye would go to that panel and ignore the others."

Kline later collaborated with Fleischer on four more features, *Soylent Green, The Don is Dead, Mr. Majestyk* and *Mandingo*. "Dick Fleischer was one of the best-prepared filmmakers I'd ever worked with. If he hadn't been, *The Boston Strangler* never could have been made the way we did it."

Kline worked with another of Hollywood's finest directors, Robert Wise, on *The Andromeda Strain* (1971). Based on the bestseller by Michael Crichton, this fact-based thriller concerned the scientific response to a deadly extraterrestrial infection accidentally unleashed on Earth via a returning space probe. The bulk of the film's action plays out in a vast, multi-level underground research complex, code-named Wildfire. Kline employed a variety of photographic techniques to keep the film visually compelling





while retaining the documentary-like feel of Crichton's novel. The result is a striking look that helps maintain the story's torturous levels of suspense.

To strip the picture of the high-polish Hollywood sheen, Kline experimented with underexposing and force-developing his Kodak film stocks. Through testing, he found that pushing his footage by 2 stops not only dulled the colors but also resulted in increased depth of field. This method proved very effective in the depiction of a small New Mexico town that is wiped out by the extraterrestrial pathogen. Indeed, Kline's inventive approach sucks the vitality out of the desert landscapes and skies as effectively as the disease (dubbed "Andromeda") drains life from its victims. "The push helped create the stark, barren, awesome look we wanted, while in the laboratory it contributed to the sterile, blank, icy look the story there needed," Kline told *AC* at the time.

The Wildfire lab sets were designed and built unconventionally — almost all of them had four walls and ceilings. Featuring extensive practicals that would generally serve as Kline's keys, the sets were constructed for realism, not to facilitate the filmmaking process. Meanwhile, Kline was plagued by unwanted reflections and glare caused by the show's set dressings, which featured stainless-steel surfaces and equipment. His solution was to use indirect bounced lighting whenever possible.

Another antidote to Kline's many challenges was the use of split diopters, which allowed him to effectively combine extreme foreground and background elements in the film's widescreen Panavision frame. "Normally, I would have done that by building up the depth of field through lighting, but that was impossible in our situation," he says. "It was often a matter of slipping the diopters in and out of the matte box during the shot in order to conceal the seam or follow an element that was moving within the frame, such as a person walking down a corridor. Although I rarely operated after becoming a cinematographer, I did get behind the camera a few times on this film, because the timing required to do that invisibly was very difficult to achieve, and I didn't want to put that kind of pressure on my operator.

"Robert Wise is the most complete director I've ever worked with, in part because of his background as a very good editor. He was constantly suggesting different ways to cover scenes or suggesting inserts that would help pull a sequence together. I've worked with some other directors who overshot,



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To present simultaneous action and elicit suspense in *Strangler,* Fleischer employed multi-panel compositions. Visual designer Fred Harpman created extensive diagrams for each shot (as shown below), which served as Kline's blueprints for the intricate camerawork.

which I feel is wasteful, but Wise was very efficient. In that way, he was so much more like the filmmakers I learned from in my early years."

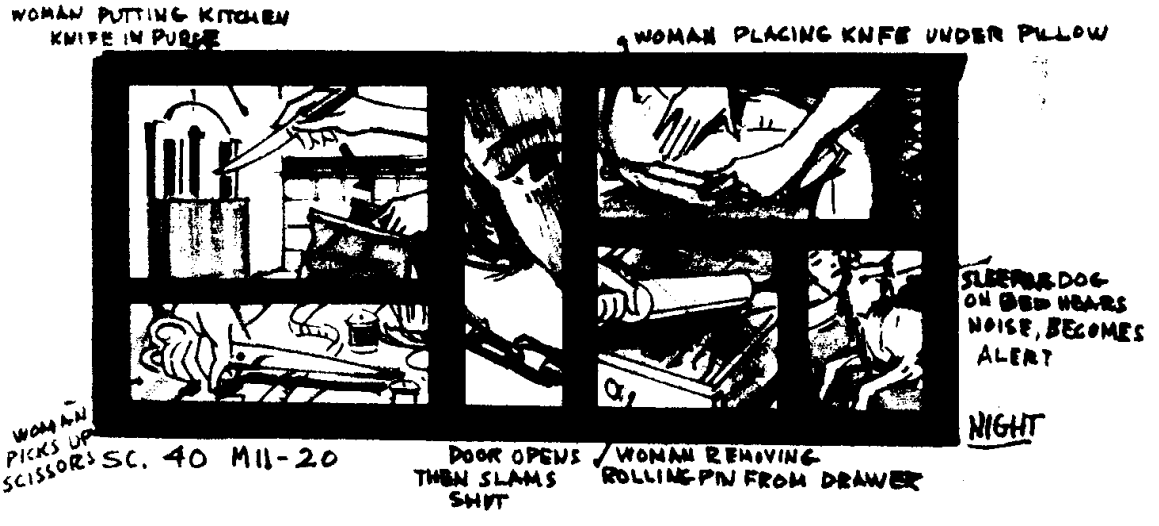
Kline re-teamed with Wise on *Star Trek — The Motion Picture* (1979), the first big-screen adaptation of the cult series. Unfortunately, the poorly planned production tested both filmmakers. "It was a victim of not enough time in prep," Kline explained to *AC*. "Unfortunately, in the production of all science-fiction films, there never seems to be enough time. We were not unique in that respect."

The cinematographer still managed to break new ground during this voyage of the starship *Enterprise,* boldly departing from the rich, high-key hues created for the series by Gerald Perry Finnerman, ASC. Kline opted for a moody, low-key look befitting the film's mysterious plot, which involved an alien entity threatening Earth. Since a large portion of the action took place on the starship's bridge, certain aspects of that key set dictated Kline's approach.

First off, the various rear-projection computer "readouts" built into the bridge set would not read on film properly if the room was illuminated much above 20 footcandles. In addition, Kline was shooting in anamorphic 35mm and was using 65mm for any live shots that would later be combined with visual effects. Nevertheless, Wise wanted a depth of field that would allow him to spread actors across the widescreen frame, where they were often staggered at varying distances from the camera. Once again, Kline's solution was to use split diopters; he employed them "on about 80 percent of the scenes shot on the bridge, sometimes using as many as three in the matte box to get the required composition in focus while concealing the seams in shadows, hot spots or vertical lines found in the set."

Much of the soft light in the film was created with directional bounced light, generally angled off of cards or foamcore, because there was not enough distance to use direct sources and diffusion. To avoid flatness, Kline often combined this technique with straight backlight, or would light a wall and allow the actor to slip into semi-silhouette or even full silhouette.

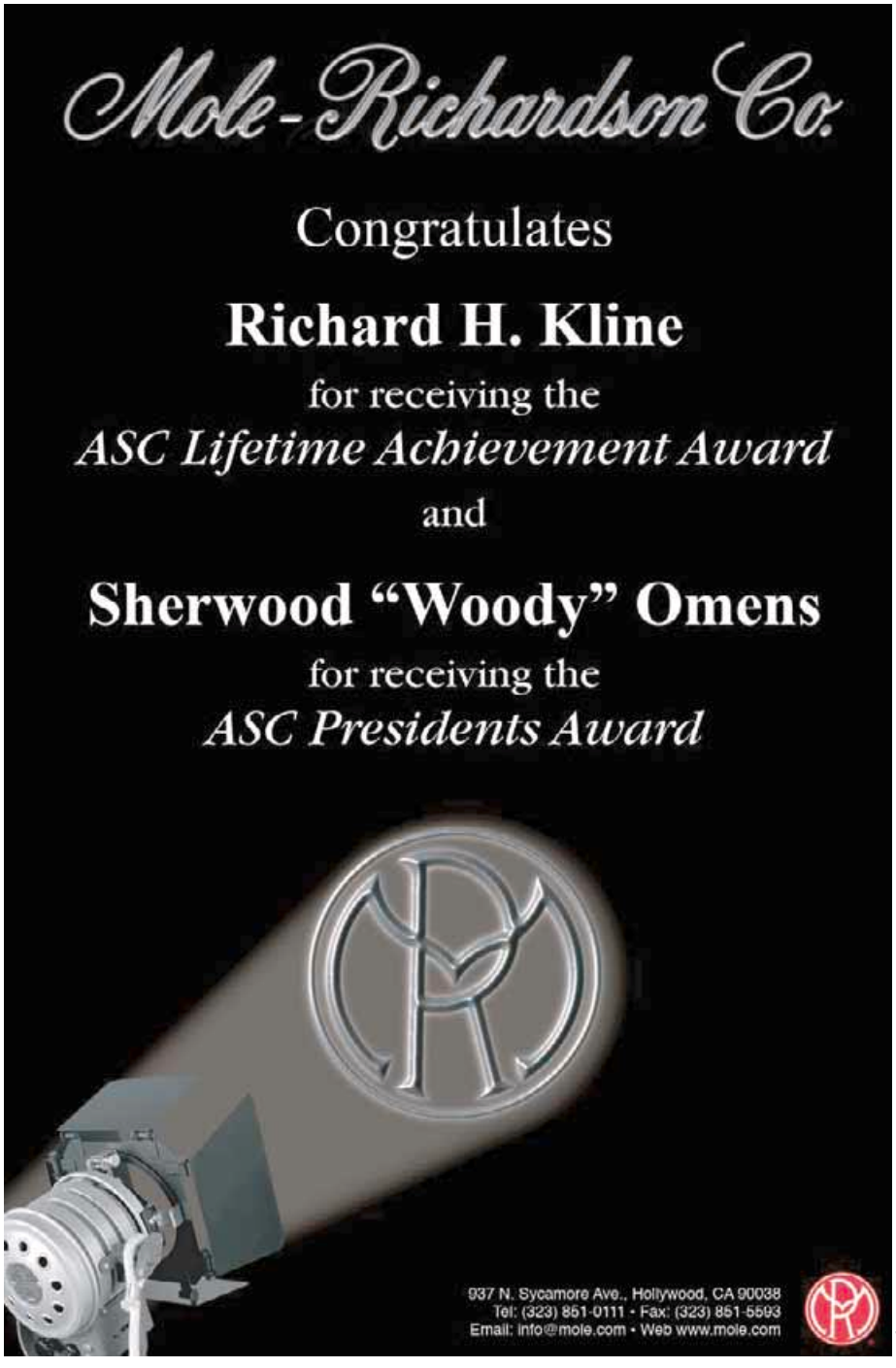
Kline wanted to support the



film's muted production design with his photography, and he decided to control contrast through lighting and the overall color palette instead of relying on special lab work. Because much of his footage would be subjected to optical-effects work, he did not want to degrade his images or allow any buildup of grain. He shunned zooms for the same reason, instead employing high-speed Panavision primes to help ensure optimum image quality and a "pristine" look. "In the end, however, *Star Trek* is an effects film, and [visual-effects supervisors] Douglas Trumbull — who also worked with us on *Andromeda Strain* — and John Dykstra [ASC] deserve much of the credit for its success," says Kline.

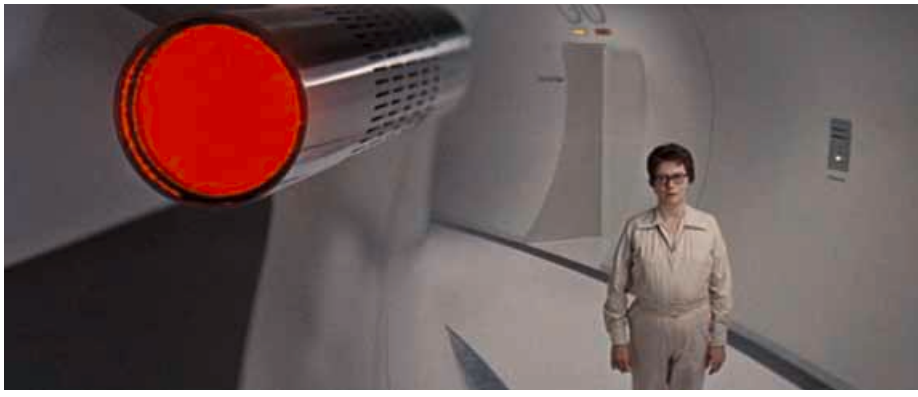
Although the cinematographer has plenty of experience working with major actors, the "biggest" star he ever worked with was the great ape in *King Kong*, Dino De Laurentiis' 1976 remake of the 1933 classic. Jessica Lange stars as the beauty who beguiles the towering beast. Directed by John Guillermin, *Kong* was a complex production on many levels, but the dilemmas invariably boiled down to one issue: making the 50'-tall gorilla seem believable through the use of life-sized and miniature effects. Italian animatronics expert Carlo Rambaldi earned the bulk of the credit for creating Kong as an impressive, full-sized ape with movable appendages. However, makeup artist Rick Baker, who performed marvelously in the Kong costume on miniature stages, deserves his share of kudos for providing the big simian with the essential personality that sells the character. Aided by second-unit cinematographer Harold Wellman, ASC, who specialized in effects photography, Kline worked closely with Baker throughout the studio-based portion of the shoot. "Rick proved to be a most talented and cooperative performer," he attests.

In close-ups, one of Kline's most effective tools for giving Kong life was also perhaps one of his least powerful: a small quartz lamp that he would handhold just off camera. Using his bare fingers or a gobo to delicately flag and shape the light, he added a bit of free-floating fill to the creature's expressive brown eyes, which were, in fact, Baker's own, covered with oversized scleral contact lenses. "It's more than just an eyelight, really," the cameraman says of his "Kline Light," a technique he actually began using many years before *Kong*. "It adds just a twinkle of life, a glimmer, and a touch of fill. I'd fan it and direct it based purely on intuition, depending on what the performer was doing. Because I stood right next to the lens, I could



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Above: Kline operates a Tyler Vibrationless camera mount alongside director Robert Wise during the filming of *The Andromeda Strain* (1971). The use of split diopters allowed the cinematographer to combine extreme foreground and background elements, as seen at right in a shot of actress Kate Reid. Kline and Wise later used this technique to similar effect on *Star Trek — The Motion Picture* (1979), as shown in the shot below of actors Persis Khambatta, William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy.

see exactly what was needed."

Although 90 percent of *Kong* takes place in "exterior" settings, approximately 80 percent of the production was actually shot onstage at MGM. Footage taken on identical, full-sized and 1/10-scale sets had to mesh with location photography shot in New York City and on the Hawaiian isle of Kauai.

During the film's climax, Kong climbs the twin towers of the World Trade Center and squares off against a squadron of attack helicopters. This sequence was largely shot onstage, with Baker performing in his stifling ape suit. However, the finale, in which a defeated Kong lies dead at the foot of the towers amid a crowd of thousands, was filmed on location in lower Manhattan. Back in the Seventies, Kline told *AC* that one angle taken from atop one of the towers — a wide shot looking straight down at Rambaldi's massive, animatronic Kong prop in the plaza below — "was very difficult to light, not only because there was no place to hide the lights, but because of the distance from the lens to the subject, which was a quarter mile below us. What read in footcandles would not truly be the right exposure, so we had to use some educated judgment to determine what the right exposure might be. I was operating the camera, which was basically out on a tiny platform attached to the side of the building, and I communicated by radio with my gaffer, Ed Carlin, who was down below. We spread the light at 50 footcandles, but at that distance it looked like five. Fortunately, through some force-processing, we were able to get it right.

"It was quite impressive, really," Kline says of the view from his vantage point. "We had about 30,000 people in the plaza, and there was an excitement in the air. It became very difficult to control the crowd at the end, and they literally tore Rambaldi's Kong apart. They wanted souvenirs, and someone even stole his eyes, which were the size of bowling balls. My only regret was that nobody got a photo of me out on that platform, because our stills guy was afraid to go up there!"

A few years later, Kline shot *Body Heat,* which he now modestly refers to as "kind of a cult film." To fans of film noir it is far more: an ode to the stylish, hardboiled genre born in the 1940s, and a film that has become a classic in its own right. Written and directed by Lawrence Kasdan and set during a steamy Florida summer, *Body Heat* is a potboiler that bears more than a fleeting resemblance to the noir favorite *Double Indemnity.* As one critic noted, the movie's tough-talking characters "sound like they've been boning up on Chandler novels."

"That doesn't sound so bad," Kline says with a grin after hearing this comment. "I suppose it may have seemed fresh or unique when it was released, but the story lent itself to the photography. It was hot and sexy, and our actors, William Hurt and Kathleen Turner, were very courageous. It was Kathleen's first major film, and I was very happy to do her screen test. I suppose I used some of the lighting techniques I learned while working with Joe Walker [ASC] so many years before. He was the master of lighting women.

"Still, we didn't go as far with our style as they did back then. I stuck to my general use of source



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A Legacy Rewarded



Right: The climactic scene in *King Kong* (1976) proved to be a tricky lighting job. To capture a bird's-eye view of the action, the cinematographer operated a camera precariously positioned atop one of the World Trade Center's towers. "I was in a harness, of course, and there were clouds passing below me!" he recalls. "The whole picture was big, dynamic and complicated — in a good way. Dino De Laurentiis was one of my favorite producers." Right: At the foot of the tower, Kline (right) and second-unit director William Kronick pose atop the vanquished Kong.

lighting — whether it was a window or sunlight or whatever — and then made the lighting of the actors fit that source. A lot of cameramen I worked for didn't care about sources; they were simply interested in what looked good. But I was interested in sources. One thing I always avoid is to allow the recipient of the light source to be hotter than the light source itself. It's unnatural."

Ironically, high temperatures were not something the cast and crew of *Body Heat* had to endure. "We shot during one of the coldest winters Florida had ever had," Kline recalls. "There's a scene where William Hurt is just in his skivvies out on the back deck of a house, and it was freezing cold. Goosebumps were our biggest problem."



During prep, Kline found that Kasdan, who was making his directing debut, "was extremely prepared. We selected some films to watch, just to give us some common ground." Kline's choice was *The Conformist,* Bernardo Bertolucci's 1970 collaboration with Vittorio Storaro, ASC, AIC. As Kline later explained to students at the American Film Institute, "I believe in variety. I think there are some brilliantly photographed films, but there's a sameness. Each scene may be a work of art, but you start seeing it repeated over and over and over again. I find that Bertolucci is a master at variation, a variety of looks within a single film. I try to do that in my work as well."

Ending his day of reminiscence at the ASC Clubhouse, Kline says with some satisfaction, "I suppose 'variety' has been a theme of sorts in my career. I tried to never repeat myself." ■

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Professor on the Set

Woody Omens, ASC is honored by the Society with its Presidents Award.

by David E. Williams



"Loyalty. Progress. Artistry." Those three words have served as the ASC's motto for 85 years, inspiring its members to look beyond their role behind the camera to serve and educate not only their comrades, but the filmmaking community at large. This selfless spirit is exemplified by Sherwood "Woody" Omens, ASC, who will be honored with the Society's Presidents Award next month. Not incidentally, Omens and longtime friend Michael Margulies, ASC co-founded the ASC Outstanding Achievement Awards in 1985. When asked how receiving the Presidents Award has helped him reconsider his work, Omens replies with the humility that those close to him know so well: "I think I've done okay for someone whose career got started so late in life."

Born in Chicago, Omens became interested in drawing and painting at an early age, and he studied both subjects at the Art Institute of Chicago. Upon graduating, in 1959, Omens taught art at a junior high school in Oak Park, Illinois, and painted during his spare time. After an exhibitor suggested that he take photos of his work, Omens began experimenting with a Pentax camera. "Pretty soon, I was teaching a junior-high photography class as well," he says. "I shot all kinds of experimental images of Chicago, and spent 4 to 11 p.m. in the school darkroom, processing and printing black-and-white stills."

Though encouraged to pursue his stills work by abstract expressionist photographer Aaron Siskind, Omens had already begun "wondering what it would be like to take movies, so I dug my father's 16mm Keystone camera out of storage." Intending to make educational films, he moved to Los Angeles with his wife and child and enrolled in the University of Southern California's School of Cinema-Television. He graduated three years later, in 1965, with a master's degree and an emphasis on cinematography.

"I'd become fascinated by the idea that there were two people on the set who had responsibilities for

making decisions," he notes, "and I wrote my thesis about the roles played by cinematographers and directors and how they related. Was it a collaborative process or a dictatorship?" Seeking answers, Omens interviewed a number of ASC greats for his paper, including Charles Clarke, Daniel L. Fapp, Arthur Miller and Harry Stradling. However, it was a chance encounter with another Society member, James Wong Howe, that left perhaps the most indelible impression on the budding filmmaker. "I recognized him walking on the street one evening and spoke to him," recalls Omens. "He asked who I was, and I told him I was a student at USC Cinema. He gave me an extemporaneous, 20-minute lesson. He said, 'Imagine you are photographing a man sitting on a park bench and want to express his feelings of loneliness. What would you do?' I didn't have an answer, so he explored all the factors, choice of lenses, camera position, time of day and what the light was like. Then he asked, 'How would the man sit on the bench? Where is he sitting and which way is he facing?' I didn't fully realize until years later how profound those questions were. It was an important part of my education."

After graduation, Omens took jobs as a film loader and assistant cameraman on 16mm documentaries. He eventually stepped up to shooting, but the difficulty of getting into the camera guild at the time prevented him from moving into narrative work. "That was a valuable experience," he says of his documentary days. "It taught me how to work quickly and make the most of natural light. But I wanted to shoot features and knew I needed experience with 35mm cameras, so I showed my documentaries to John Urie, who had a successful commercial-production company. About six months later, he called and said he had a job.



"John put me to work in two ways: I assisted his cinematographers, Ed Martin and John Hora [ASC], and I shot test commercials. After about a year, I got bold enough to say to John, 'How about letting me shoot all the time?' He said no. After thinking about that for a while, I made a sample reel and got hired by other directors to shoot commercials for different production companies. It was a very exper-



Opposite page: Woody Omens, ASC looks right at home behind a Panaflex during the filming of *Boomerang* in 1992. This page, top: Wielding his clockwork 16mm Bolex, a youthful Omens becomes a witness to history as he slips between President Lyndon Johnson (right) and press secretary Pierre Salinger while filming a student documentary in 1964. The cameraman shot numerous docs before getting his chance to do narrative work, and he says the experience "gave me an appreciation for time and capturing the moment." Left: Omens takes a reading while filming his USC thesis film *The Adolescent Years* (1965).

Photos courtesy of Woody Omens.

Professor on the Set





Near right: Omens goes handheld with an Arri 16-S while shooting his Oscar-nominated short documentary *Somebody Waiting* in 1971. The cameraman also produced the film with Dick Snider (right) and Hal Riney. Far right: Years later, Omens shares his hard-won wisdom with a new generation of cinematographers at a Maine Photographic Workshop class in Ojai. Bottom left: Omens and Eddie Murphy plot a shot while filming the actor's directorial debut, *Harlem Nights* (1989). Bottom, right: The cameraman with actress Cheryl Ladd during filming of *The Grace Kelly Story* (1983).

imental time for commercials. I was learning my craft and getting to use the best equipment."

While shooting documentaries, Omens shared an Academy Award nomination for the documentary short subject *Somebody Waiting* (1972), on which he served as a producer and the cinematographer.

Six years later, he caught the break he'd been waiting for: "Jim Sommers, a commercial producer I was working with, introduced me to Robert Ellis Miller, who was going to direct the television movie *Ishi: The Last of his Tribe,* which had a terrific script. What I brought to it was my commercials training, my ability to turn out shot after shot, scene after scene, very quickly. What commercials also taught me was how to light close-ups. Great masters and great close-ups make great cinema; the rest is connective tissue. I shot a couple of other TV movies after that — *Stone* and *Man in the Santa Claus Suit* — and then I shot the *Magnum P.I.* pilot [in 1980]."

Photographed in Hawaii, *Magnum P.I.* earned Omens his first Emmy nomination. He later won consecutive Emmys for the telefilms *An Early Frost* (1986), *Heart Of The City* (1987) and *I Saw What You Did* (1988). He was also nominated for *Evergreen* (1985) and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (1986). Omens earned an ASC Award in 1987, for the pilot for *Heart of the City*.

"I love working with good directors, people who are truly trying to communicate something to the audience" he says, citing *Evergreen* director Fielder Cook and *An Early Frost* director John Erman as two favorites. "A good director helps you do your best work. But the challenge of being a cinematographer is that you don't always know who your next partner is going to be. Will he be open-minded, confident enough to accept multiple and often conflicting opinions? You have to have an ego to be a director, but not so much ego that it precludes you from accepting input. The best directors will take ideas from craft services! It's the cinematographer's job to help that process, to be of service to the script, the director, the actors and, of course, themselves. There's a hierarchy, and you're often putting other people first. That's part of the job.

"Now, there are cinematographers who put themselves first, but no great cinematographer puts himself above the script, because that's always going to be translated through the director and actors. To excel at cinematography, you have to learn to do what Conrad Hall [ASC] was so great at: process all that input in your mental computer and translate it visually. When it's done right, it's magic, and Connie was the master of it. The results don't look like anything else you've shot, but they have a familiar creative essence."

Omens' feature credits include the comedies *History of the World: Part I* (1981), *Coming to America* (1988) and *Harlem Nights* (1989),





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Professor on the Set





Clockwise from near right: Omens gets an unintentional earful from first AD David Sosna while shooting *Coming to America* (1988); the cameraman checks his light on *Harlem Nights* co-stars Richard Pryor (left) and Redd Foxx; Omens (in gray suit) and director John Landis (with dancer) plan a dance routine for *Coming to America;* the cinematographer takes a reading on the "inquisition" set for Mel Brooks' outrageous comedy *History of the World, Part I* (1981).

the latter of which was actor Eddie Murphy's directorial debut. "Eddie and I had formed a good working relationship while making *Coming to America*," says Omens, referring to the fish-out-of-water tale about a dapper African prince seeking true love in Queens, New York. Murphy plays several roles in the film, and some called for elaborate prosthetics (created by makeup artist Rick Baker). "Working with Rick Baker was a great collaboration because the makeup was so good, and because I was very critical about what could stand up in close-ups, angles that would reveal seams and lighting that didn't look right, and Rick welcomed my input. There was a great dialogue between us, and that's key to any success on the set.

"But the cameraman has to have an eye for detail even with just standard makeup, and one thing I insisted upon with Eddie's 'normal' makeup was that his artist powder him just inside the ears. Good makeup has a smooth tonality, and that inside part of the ear can sometimes be shiny, which can result in a very distracting highlight in profile shots. It's much more distracting if the actor has dark skin, and there's nothing you can do about it unless you catch it before you shoot."

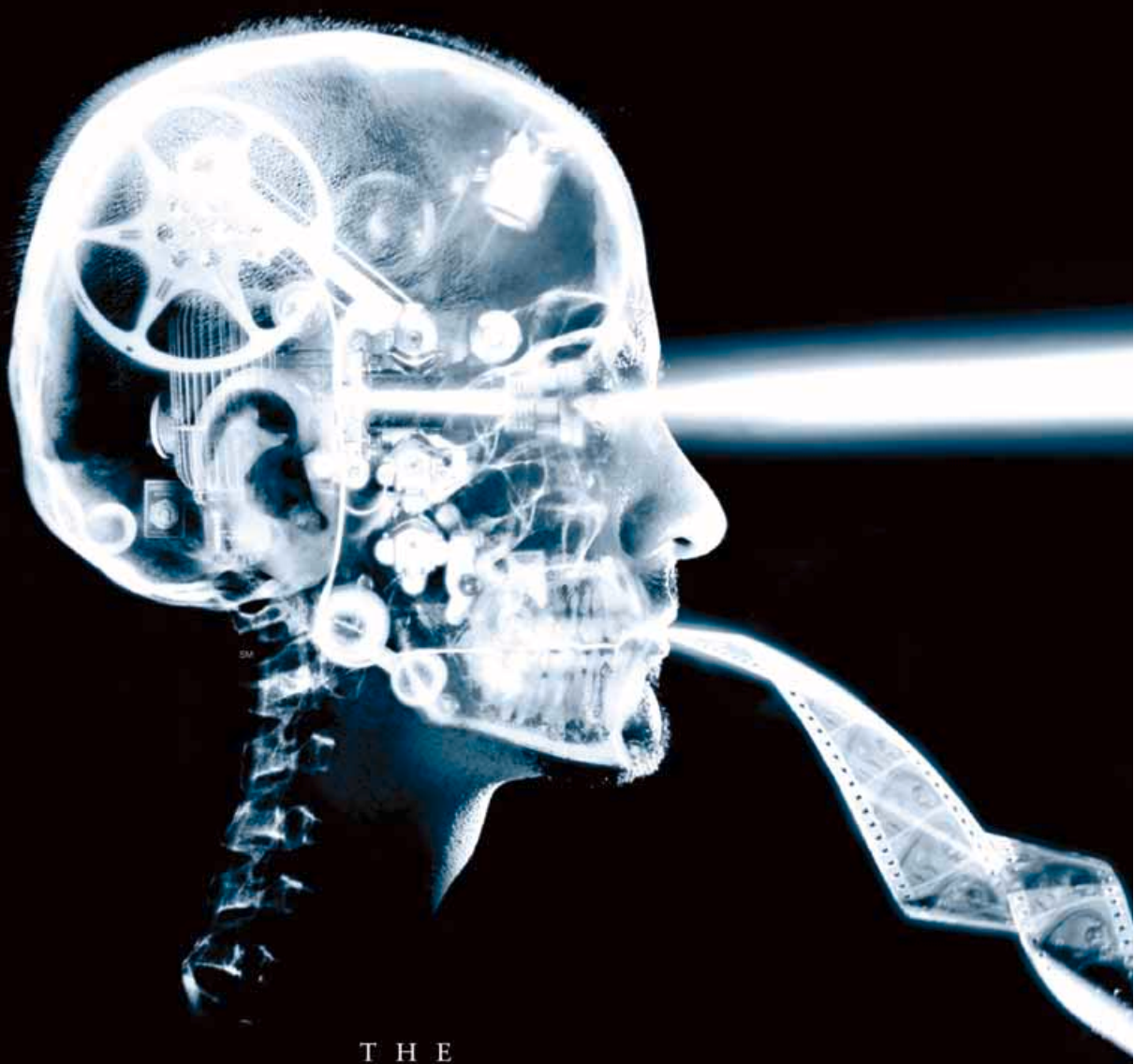
The time-saving lighting techniques Omens mastered earlier in his career became vitally important, because "if one needed the usual 20 or 30 minutes of re-lighting to move in from a wide shot to a close-up, Eddie would leave the set, and it could take a considerable amount of time to get him back. But early on, I convinced him I could do it in five minutes — if he just took a seat in place, I could relight and get him back to performing very quickly. It was a matter of building most of his close-up lighting into the master and making just a few small adjustments to get it right. I proved it could work, and Eddie was very happy. He's a complete professional, and anything I could do to keep things moving was very welcome. I think that's one reason why he asked me to shoot *Harlem Nights*."

Set in the 1930s, *Harlem Nights* features Murphy as the smooth-talking owner of an illegal casino who is trying to simultaneously dodge crooked cops and the Mob. The film features an impressive crew, including production designer Lawrence G. Paull and costume designer Joe I. Tompkins. "Most of the story took place in Harlem in 1938, and more recent movies set in that period tend to look like faded photographs," notes Omens. "That's because our visual memory is based on a visual cliché, sepia-toned images we associate with photo albums and old picture books. We searched bookstores, libraries and archives for clues about what Harlem was like during the late 1930s. One of the best sources we found was *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto* [by Gilbert Osofsky]. I origi-





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Professor on the Set





Top left: Posing for a "presidential group portrait" are (clockwise from upper left) former ASC presidents Omens, William A. Fraker, Victor J. Kemper, Owen Roizman and Ralph Woolsey, with current president Richard Crudo. Top right: Omens (at bottom, center) enjoys the ASC Awards with a cadre of students and fellow ASC members John Hora (with red boutonniere) and Conrad Hall (right of Hora). Bottom: Close friend Hall has a heart-to-heart chat with Omens.

nally thought we should shoot in black-and-white, but after researching, I decided to make black skin tones the most essential color in the film and use a limited palette. That would set off and highlight the beautiful skin tones of our cast, which was mostly black. I didn't know what Eddie and Larry Paull and Joe Tompkins would think about this, so I created a color chart to demonstrate my idea. After seeing it, they supported the idea, and it became the basis for the look of the entire picture. In that environment, a few very strong color accents seemed to jump off the screen, but most importantly, the skin tones of the actors dominated each scene.

"My only disappointment was that it's so far the only film Eddie has directed," he adds. "He just didn't like to be bogged down by the details of directing. It's a pity, because he could be a very good director."



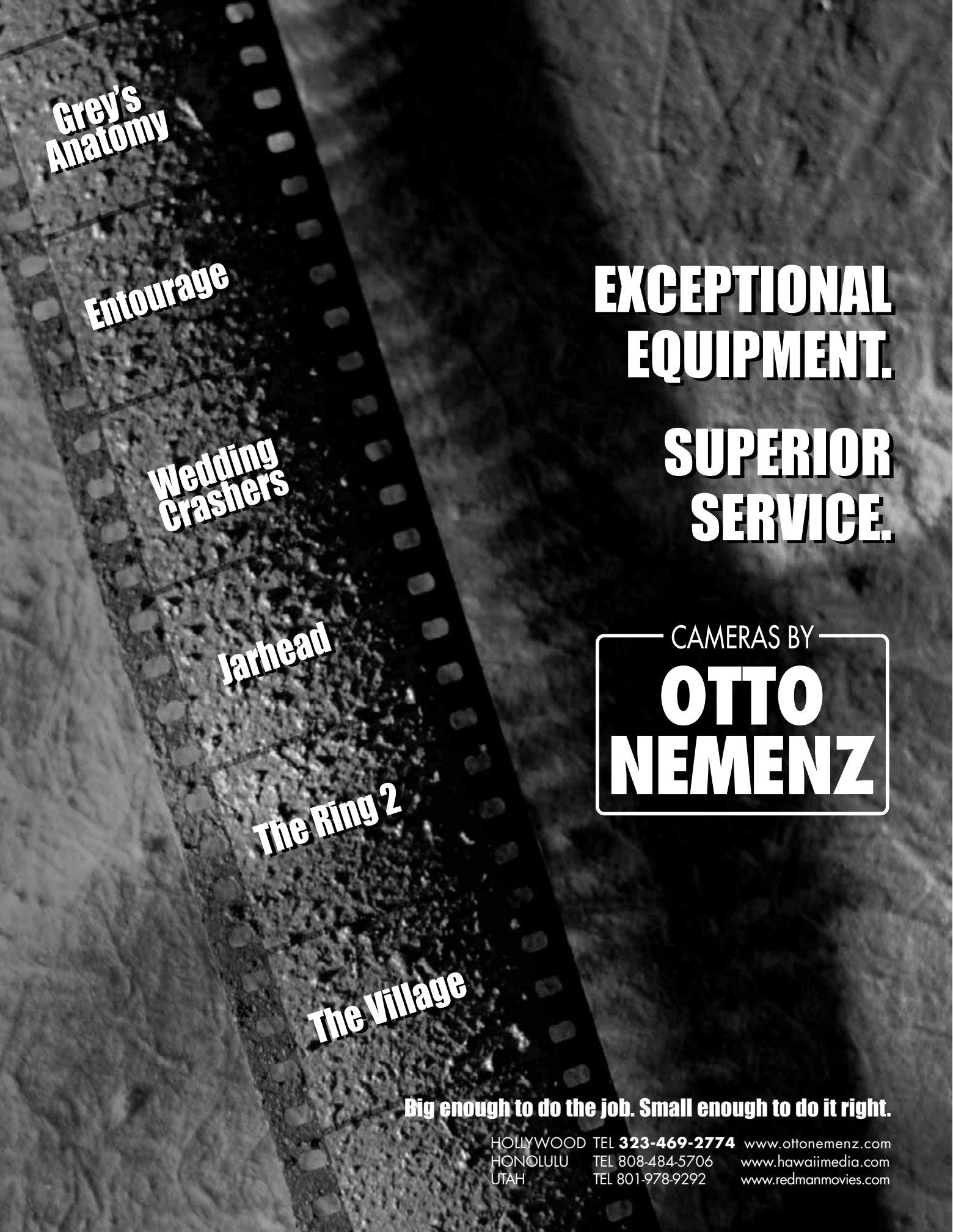
In 1992, Omens shot another Murphy vehicle, *Boomerang*, a romantic comedy in which the actor stars as a womanizing advertising exec who meets his match in his new boss (Robin Givens) and her assistant (Halle Berry). "Reginald Hudlin directed the film, and though we had a good collaboration, I know I was there because of Eddie — he felt comfortable working with me," says Omens. "That meant a lot to me."

After *Boomerang*, Omens dedicated himself to full-time teaching at USC. "I suppose I've lived a bit of a double life," he says, noting that he had been serving as a part-time instructor there since 1967. "Some of my crew have joked over the years that I was the 'professor on the set.' But teaching has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life; it has taught me more than I would have ever learned on my own. I learn so much from my students, and they keep me energized."

Omens taught at USC full time until 2004, when he was named Professor Emeritus. He recently presented the Conrad W. Hall Chair in Cinematography and Color Timing to Judy Irola, ASC on behalf of George Lucas and Steven Spielberg.

As president of the ASC, a position he held from 1998-99, Omens ramped up the Society's educational activities and re-activated the student Heritage Award program, which had lain dormant for many years. He is currently furthering the training of tomorrow's filmmakers by raising funds to build the ASC Technology and Education Center, which will be located next to the organization's famed Clubhouse in Hollywood.

"I suppose if I have a criticism of my work, it's that I sometimes served other people more than myself," he says. "I delivered professional work, but in my mind it was never good enough because I didn't push to do something beyond what was expected. Some of it is lighting, some of it is camera placement, some of it is overall creative conception. For those reasons, [ASC members] Connie Hall, Gordon Willis, Vittorio Storaro and Owen Roizman are heroes of mine — they dared to try things. I never gave myself the chance to take the risks that great artists have to take. That's a lesson I tried to pass on to my students: take those risks and never have regrets." ■



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Short Takes

A Musical Campaign Gives Arri's D-20 a Test Run

by Stephanie Argy



For LG Electronics' "Sing It" campaign, the Arri D-20's low-light sensitivity allowed Curtis Clark, ASC to shoot long-lens scenes of a man (James Meehan) walking down Hollywood Boulevard at night using only available light.

When Bill Lovell, the product manager for digital cameras at Arri, brought the company's long-awaited digital camera, the D-20, to Los Angeles to present it to the ASC's Technology Committee, he asked whether committee chairman Curtis Clark, ASC had any jobs coming up that might be appropriate for a test run. As it turned out, Clark had one that was perfect: a three-commercial campaign for an LG Electronics cell phone/MP3 player that would make its debut on the Internet but might eventually be broadcast elsewhere. Clark and director Eric Steinman had discussed shooting the spots digitally, and Lovell's offer came along at exactly the right moment.

The campaign, "Sing It," shows LG Electronics customers singing their calls to the tune of familiar songs such as "Bohemian Rhapsody" and "Girl From Ipanema." Steinman says the agency referred to the commercial as a "viral campaign" and told him there was no telling where it might end up playing. "Who knows if you could see these in a cinema someday, or if they would be broadcast?" says Steinman. Because of that, he and Clark agreed that even though the camera was overqualified for an Internet ad, shooting with the D-20 left the door open for other uses in the future.



At the time, Clark already had shot two sets of tests with the D-20, and he was impressed by the results. "The camera doesn't come from a video lineage," he says. "It's designed as a digital motion-picture camera." Like the Dalsa Origin and the Panavision Genesis, the D-20 uses a single image sensor; whereas the Dalsa and Genesis use a CCD, the D-20 uses a CMOS. Because their sensors are at least as large as a 35mm film aperture, all three cameras can use 35mm film lenses. This differentiates them from cameras such as the Thomson Grass Valley Viper FilmStream and the Sony HDW-F900, which have three-chip CCD arrays that are only ⅔". "Because the sensor in those cameras is smaller than 16mm, they have almost infinite depth of field, which is an image characteristic people associate with video," says Clark.

The "Sing It" spots were shot in one day at three Los Angeles locations: on a bus, in a nail salon, and on Hollywood Boulevard after dusk. In all three places, Clark used only a few very small lights. On the bus, he used three Arri HMI Sun Guns; in the nail salon, he used two Kino Flo ParaBeams and one Pocket Par; and on Hollywood Boulevard, he relied on the available light cast by stores, streetlamps and neon signs.

Clark had shot his first D-20 test with Arri's new Master Primes, which have a maximum aperture of T1.3. To see what the camera and lenses could do at night, he had lit a street in downtown Los Angeles with the headlights of a car parked a couple of blocks away. Then, using a 100mm lens, he started a shot on a second-floor window lit with available fluorescent light, then tilted

Frame grabs courtesy of Trio Films and Post Logic. Production photos by Matt Johnston.

down to the street to follow several passing cars and pedestrians. "I thought it would be an acid test for both the D-20 and the Master Primes, and the results were pretty amazing," says the cinematographer. "It was the equivalent of 400 ASA, maybe more."

On the "Sing It" shoot, Clark did a practical test of the camera's dynamic range. "In the nail salon, I measured with my Minolta spot meter from the highlights to the shadows. It was about 10 stops from the highest to the lowest." In the salon and on the bus, he found that even when he exposed for the interiors, details outside the windows remained clearly visible.

Moreover, he found that the D-20 seems optimized to pull out details from the midtones through the shadows. "It gives you more delineation than you sometimes get with film. My spot meter was telling me I shouldn't be getting detail in areas where we were getting it. It's certainly something that needs further testing — how far you can go before you reach black?"

Based on his earlier test, Clark felt confident about using the D-20 for the Hollywood Boulevard sequence, even though he would be using Zeiss Ultra Primes, which were one stop slower than Arri's Master Primes, and an Angenieux Optimo 24-290mm zoom, which was two stops slower. He notes that if he had been shooting on film, he would have been more concerned about the light levels. "If we were talking about a project that required a lot of night shooting with only Pocket Pars, ParaBeams and Sun Guns, I'd be a little more hesitant if it were on film than I would be with the D-20."

Steinman says the Hollywood Boulevard spot reminds him of the imagery in *48 Hours,* shot by cinematographer Ric Waite, ASC. "That film was unique at the time because it had a lot of night-exterior long-lens shots that looked as though they were done in available light," says the director. "We were getting that kind of gritty, artistically interesting look but didn't need movie lights for it."

As Clark points out, locations are sometimes chosen for the characteristics of the existing light, but in order for those characteristics to register on film, they have to be enhanced. However, the D-20's sensitivity in low-light situations made Clark confident he could rely on existing light for much of the overall illumination and begin fine-tuning the subtle details that much sooner.

Steinman says the actors in the commercials were liberated by the longer running time facilitated by the digital format. According to his producer at Trio Films, Taylor Ferguson, each 40-minute HDCam SR tape cost about $80, and it would have cost $3,480 to buy and process 40 minutes worth of 35mm film. As a result, Steinman felt he could be looser about when to cut. "It didn't have to be so formalized," he says. "I told the AD, 'When I'm walking up to the actors, you'll know to cut there, and when it looks like I'm walking back, start rolling.' It made the actors comfortable; it was almost like a stage workshop."

Clark also found working with

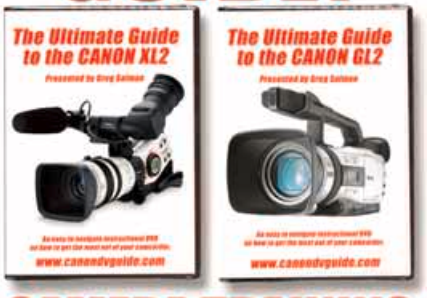




Top and middle: To shoot a woman (Pamela Chan) in a nail salon, Clark measured about a 10-stop range from highlight to shadow and found that even when he exposed for the interiors, details outside the windows remained clearly visible. Below: Clark (left) and director Eric Steinman check a shot on the monitor.



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Clark captures one of the nighttime shots on Hollywood Boulevard.

the D-20 very comfortable, partly because the camera has an optical viewfinder. "When you look through the camera, it doesn't feel any different than looking through an Arri 535," he says. "Also, the fact that the viewfinder is not electronic is quite important, because that allows you to set up a shot before the power is up."

The D-20 will eventually be capable of running 150 fps — an important feature for commercial and music-video work — but the model used on "Sing It" did not have this capability.

According to Steinman, part of the challenge of using digital cameras in the high-end commercial world is convincing ad agencies that shooting digitally doesn't mean lesser quality. "Whenever you suggest video or any digital format, people tend to suspect you're trying to save money," he says. "With all the commercial clutter out there, each shot has to have visual integrity, and the D-20 is a system you can recommend for reasons that have everything to do with quality. I saw detail in eyelashes, glimmers in eyes and shadings that are like the finest-grain film stock out there. The subtleties are remarkable."

Lou Levinson, senior colorist at Post Logic Studios, evaluated the footage with Clark and Steinman, and his first impression was that it looked quite filmic. "We didn't do a lot of color correction, but as an experiment we did drive some of the darker material as bright as we could to see what we could recover," says Levinson. "We were pushing things beyond what you would ordinarily do. It didn't quite catch as much as film, but it caught a lot of it." He adds that images captured by the D-20 and other new digital cameras appear to avoid some of the edge enhancement that characterized earlier hi-def images.

During the grade with Levinson, Clark found the D-20's reproduction of dynamic range exceeded his expectations. "It had tonal gradations you expect to get from film, which you don't always get from digital cameras. The delineation of detail and the subtleness of gradation of tone scales were as good as I've seen with a digital camera."

He adds that the D-20 will soon raise some interesting aesthetic and technical questions. "It certainly indicates that there are some creative and technical explorations that need to happen. If these kinds of cameras can maintain the image quality we expect from film, it begs the question, 'Why am I not using this camera?'" ■



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Post Focus

Assessing Kodak's Look Manager
by Stephanie Argy

Two years ago, Kodak introduced the Look Manager System (KLMS), a software-based tool that enables cinematographers to experiment with different looks by simulating stocks, filters, gels, in-camera effects and post processes, and to share their files with labs, colorists, visual-effects supervisors, and other parties. Kodak recently announced KLMS Version 2, which streamlines many operations that users of the original system found time-consuming. As use of KLMS becomes more common, cinematographers are finding their own ways to integrate it into their work.

Director of photography Steve Mason, ASC, who used the original version of the system on the feature *Harsh Times* and several other projects, says he finds that film terms often no longer apply when dealing with labs and colorists, which makes the communication offered by KLMS all the more important. "It gives you access to the language and allows you to become precise," he says.

The system also makes it possible to establish a look for a project from the beginning. Rob McLachlan, ASC, CSC first used KLMS on the feature *Final Destination III*, and he used it again on the telefilm *Dead End*, which he shot on Super 16mm for transfer to HD. "*Dead End* bounced around a lot in a semi-documentary style," he says. "There were a lot of different locations and time periods, and each period and setting had a different look. In the past, I would have done a flat, straightforward transfer of the negative to tape with the hope of being present for the final color timing. The problem is that after executives have grown accustomed to looking at dailies in editing, any change in the final timing confounds them. With Look Manager, we're basically timing the movie as we go along, and everyone knows from the get-go what the finished show will look like. And if we feel we're not getting it, it allows time to adapt the lighting or filtration right away."

The original version of KLMS was structured around flowcharts that represent the workflow through which an image passes, from camera negative through release print. According to Peter Postma, digital/hybrid sales manager at Eastman Kodak, Version 2 still has the flowcharts, but it offers a simpler user interface and easily applied templates for faster experiments and adjustments. Shots can be organized by scene or by date, and a new Synchronize feature makes it possible for users to update all changes and save any newly imported images with a single click, rather than having to manually save individual images and settings. Also, for the first time, the system can export 3-D look-up tables so that post facilities have an even more accurate representation of the cinematographer's intent for a shot.

KLMS works with still reference images taken on set, which can be scanned from film or taken with a digital camera. With digital stills, the system reverse-engineers the camera data so that the images can be matched to particular film stocks. This means it operates only with certain digital cameras, a list that has grown longer with the introduction of Version 2. The original system supports Canon's 10D, 20D, 300D (Rebel), 1Ds and 1Ds MKII; and Nikon's D70, D100, D1X and D2H. Version 2 supports those cameras as well as the Canon 350D (Rebel XT) and the Nikon D50 and D70s.

Kodak offers both Mac and Windows versions of the software, and Postma estimates that 80 percent of his

These stills from *The Invisible* illustrate how Gabriel Beristain, ASC, BSC and camera assistant Max Armstrong used Kodak Look Manager to show the lab how the look of a scene had to be altered. Originally shot as a night scene with heavy shadows, the setting was shifted to dusk by script revisions. "This required a re-transfer of all materials we'd shot," says Armstrong. "With Look Manager, we were able to shift the lighting to a dusk feel, bring up a lot more detail, and communicate to the timer exactly what we wanted done."





customers use Apple computers. Although many run the system on a laptop, Kodak recommends the use of a separate, high-quality monitor. McLachlan estimates that he spent about $6,000 to upgrade his laptop and buy a Nikon D70 and LaCie monitor so he could use the system.

Finding a way to fit KLMS into the production workflow — and a way to persuade producers to pay for it — is still a work in progress, and cinematographers have taken different approaches. Gabriel Beristain, ASC, BSC takes photos of his own but likes to have a dedicated technician who takes additional shots, runs KLMS and communicates with the lab and other post facilities. Although Beristain was able to persuade the producers of *The Sentinel* to accommodate his request, those involved with *The Invisible* initially wanted his technician, Max Armstrong, to work as a loader as well. When the workload proved too much, another camera assistant was hired. Armstrong keeps his cart on the set so that Beristain can quickly check his work. "Some people have done tests with the cart located in the truck," says Armstrong, "but I find it's more convenient for Gabby to walk two steps from the video village."

Other cinematographers are taking all of their own photos and doing their look experiments themselves — often after they finish a long day of shooting. "It's extremely difficult to get any production to pay for anything extra," notes Stephen Goldblatt, ASC, BSC, who used Look Manager on *Closer* (see *AC* Dec. '04) and *Rent* (*AC* Nov. '05). "Also, you've got to do the work. I suppose someone else could take the stills, but they wouldn't be getting what you're interested in."

Like Goldblatt, Mason and McLachlan shoot and manipulate their own stills. "I love getting in there at night and timing all the stills," says Mason. "It really teaches me, especially these days, when you don't get film dailies. This gives you a chance to study your shots, work out what you're doing, and time the image." ➢

Photos by Max Armstrong and Doane Gregory, courtesy of Max Armstrong.

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Armstrong (left) and Beristain use Look Manager on the set.

KLMS has a built-in calibration system that uses a probe measurement device that attaches to the monitor. "Ideally, you calibrate every morning when you boot up," says Postma. "If you're on a set moving around a lot, you do it more often." Armstrong calibrates his monitor once a day, and he also often visits the colorist at the end of the day to compare images and make sure they're seeing the same things. He estimates that his on-set calibration process takes 20 minutes but can run unattended.

Armstrong notes that one logistical challenge has been keeping a consistent power supply running to the computer so he doesn't have to recalibrate throughout the day. "I have a little inverter that switches me over to DC power, but it doesn't last very long," he says. "I'm still trying to design an emergency-backup power system."

As cinematographers and their assistants work out their approaches to KLMS, they also find themselves having to educate their collaborators about it. McLachlan has found that many studio postproduction executives, producers and unit production managers are still unaware of the system. Although Technicolor Vancouver was happy to accommodate his request to use KLMS on *Final Destination III*, the Vancouver post house he worked with on *Dead End*, Rainmaker, told the show's producers that the system was experimental and didn't work. "I've since convinced them otherwise, after agreeing to use them only if they got the software," says McLachlan. "Now my timer there, Ernie Moser, loves it."

Others in the industry might feel threatened by the software. Beristain says he has found it important to assure the unit photographer that no one is taking over his job, and before every show, he explains to the color timers that he doesn't want to tell them how to do their work. "A lot of color timers still freak out because they think you're saying, 'Do it exactly like this,'" says Beristain. "But I tell them, 'I'm not a color timer, I'm just giving you a very strong reference for what I want the image to look like. Now take it to the next level.'"

McLachlan says it's important for Kodak to explain the system to producers so they can budget for it in advance and understand how it can save them money. "There was recently a test screening of *Final Destination III* with HD projection, and apparently, it took hardly any time to tweak the timing of the HD assembly," says the cinematographer. "That would entirely be due to the original transfer being right on the money. Plus, I know the release prints on standard print stocks will look the same. That must have saved New Line a lot of money on post costs. My argument for Look Manager is that while it might not speed up dailies-transfer time — as opposed to a bland, one-light roll across — it will save a lot of time in online final color correction because the final looks will have already been established and applied."

That was certainly the case when Goldblatt did the digital intermediate (DI) for *Rent*. Because he had already established a look so close to the final, he and EFilm colorist Steve Scott could finish a reel every 1½ days. "If your dailies are really good," says Goldblatt, "it's possible to do the DI in two weeks, though that's pushing it. It's better to have a little more time."

As of this writing, production companies can license KLMS Version 1.1 for $2,000 per month or $750 per week. Postma says the pricing will change for Version 2, but the cost has not yet been announced. Beristain says he objects to the way in which Kodak licenses the system to productions; he believes Kodak should make the system readily available so it can become the Adobe Photoshop of the film industry. "Kodak should realize that this is not only for a director of photography," says Beristain. "They should sell the licenses, sell the software, and I have told them that. How many times do I have to communicate with a producer, a director and a visual-effects supervisor? I am the one generating the image, and I want everyone else to see the same image. If we have the same calibration, they will have a very good idea of what I'm doing."

Postma notes that any accredited cinematographer or film student can get a special cinematographer's edition of KLMS. That version can't be used to communicate with a lab or any other copy of the software, but it allows users to experiment with different looks. Having that ability can help build confidence. "It makes you very daring, with night work in particular," says Goldblatt.

He recalls that on *Rent*, he often played very close to the edge, and he found it comforting to put his stills in KLMS and see what he had. For the performance of the song "Light My Candle," he keyed the entire scene, including an enormous backdrop, to the light available from a single candle. "It was extra dim, and no matter how many films you've done, that sort of thing makes you nervous. You look at it by eye and think, 'Have I really blown it?' But I was perfectly confident that this little experiment was working well, and I loved that. I would use Look Manager even if it wasn't connected to the lab, because you can have a visual rumination on your work."

Mason says that he, too, has become more adventurous: "I know exactly what I'm getting now, so I take greater risks and underexpose much more than I otherwise would. It makes you a more courageous cinematographer, a better one."

Modern VideoFilm's Viper Workflow
by Stephanie Argy

This season, colorist Todd Bochner of Modern VideoFilm has been working on two television series being shot with the Thomson Grass Valley Viper FilmStream camera: *Everybody Hates Chris,* shot by Mark Doering-Powell, and *Sex, Love & Secrets*, shot by Crescenzo Notarile. The footage for both shows goes to Bochner raw, with no color correction applied in camera, so the level of trust that the two cinematographers must place in him is even higher than usual. "People like Todd are becoming more and more important," says Notarile. "With so much information, there are infinite directions you can take [in post] and a tremendous range of options. You're relying on somebody's sensibilities; it's like a photographer letting someone else make the print."

The Viper can shoot in four modes: FilmStream, which is raw, unprocessed RGB 4:4:4 output; RGB mode, which gives the full RGB 4:4:4 output but allows processing within the camera; HDStream, which outputs a component 4:2:2 stream with no processing applied; and YCrCb, which is the 4:2:2 signal with in-camera processing. Both Notarile and Doering-Powell have been shooting their shows in HDStream mode, recorded onto HDCam SR tape.

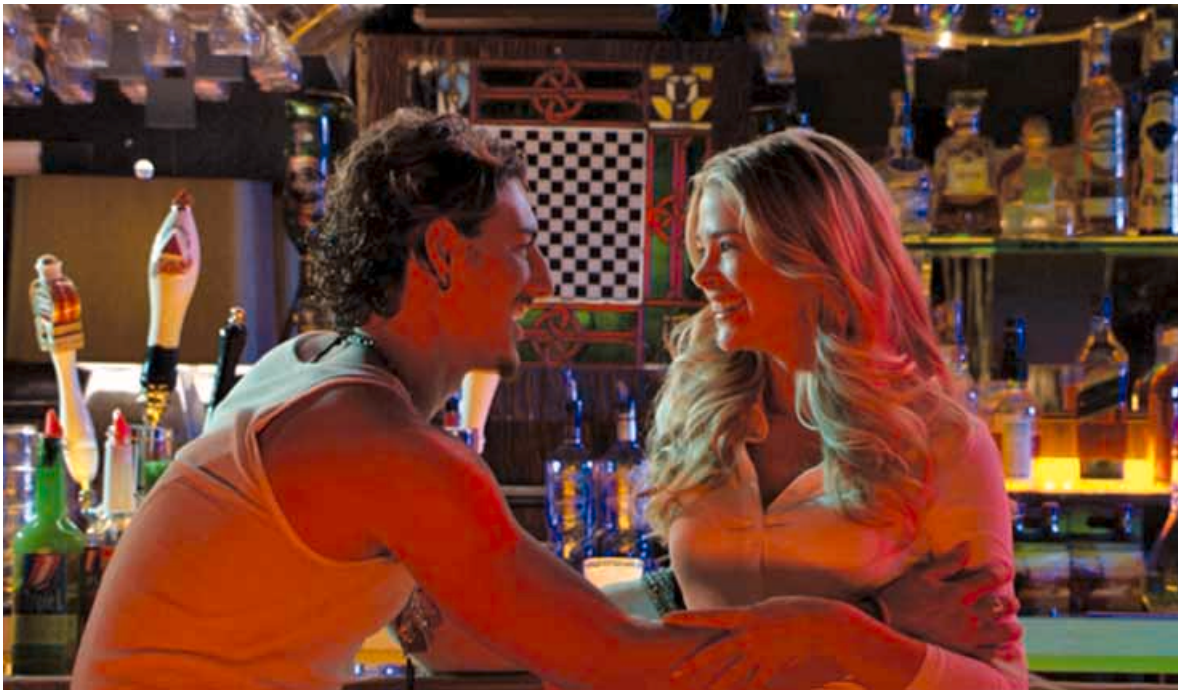
Doering-Powell says some cinematographers who have heard he's using the Viper for *Everybody Hates Chris* ask him if it isn't a case of overkill. "They think it's 4:4:4 to disk," he says. "But it's not. In terms of setup, it's not any more complex than if you were running a [Sony] F900; you're just recording onto a better tape format. HDCam falls apart a lot more quickly in color correction. I feel like HDCam SR is going to take over in terms of tape formats."

For *Sex, Love and Secrets*, Modern VideoFilm dubs selects from the original HDCam SR tapes to D-5 and Beta SP for the editors; *Everybody Hates Chris* stays on HDCam SR throughout





Right: *Sex, Love & Secrets* (starring Eric Balfour and Denise Richards) is one of the Viper-shot series graded at Modern VideoFilm. Below: Modern VideoFilm colorist Todd Bochner works on another Viper-originated project, *Everybody Hates Chris*.



the editorial process. Bochner color-corrects the series on a da Vinci 2K Plus. "The images from both shows are a little green and not flattering out of the box, but they're made to color-correct," says Bochner, adding that he finds the Viper footage "thick," like a well-exposed negative. "It's so easy to manipulate, and it takes a lot to get it grainy. I can pull more out of the blacks than I can with any other video-capture device I've worked with, and the highlights aren't clipped."

Notarile was impressed by the way the Viper handles contrast: "I saw details in windows, in sconces, in lights, and I saw information in the blacks, even in shadows or under tables, which was extraordinary."

Doering-Powell recalls that in one *Everybody Hates Chris* scene shot in a disco, there were many neon tubes, including some that were a gold color. "Some of the neon tubes were metering 4½ to 5 stops over, easily, and they were still gold — nothing was clipping," he says. He adds that the camera's dynamic range has helped him maintain more naturalistic lighting than is usually possible with digital video. He has found that in harsh sunlight, the Viper requires less light to fill in the shadows than other digital cameras. "Normally you'd have every bounce off the truck, especially if you're working with darker skin tones," he says. "The Viper requires some work, but it's not as much of a bear as regular video."



Both Notarile and Doering-Powell were able to spend time with Bochner to establish a look early on, but once the shows began airing, they had little time to go to the post facility. Bochner says Doering-Powell focused on very specific skin tones he wanted to create for the characters on his series. "The Viper gives you everything you want to work with," says Bochner. "It's very complementary to skin tones, especially darker ones." Doering-Powell adds, "Color is so tough to nail down. Some digital cameras become really punchy, so you have to be careful. The Viper reacts more naturally, which I think may be because the sensor has more range; it doesn't get as finicky with every little change in color."

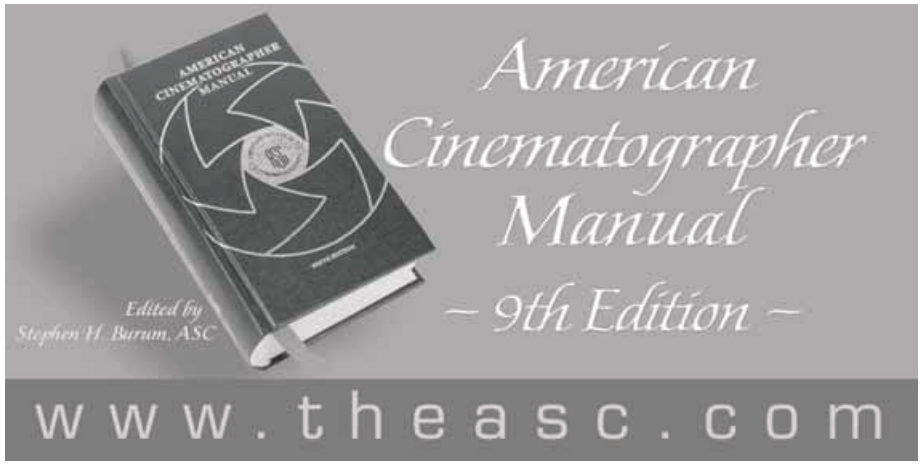
On *Sex, Love & Secrets*, Bochner has tried to maintain the stylized look established in the pilot, using copious Power Windows, vignettes and defo-

Top photo courtesy of UPN. Bottom photo courtesy of Modern VideoFilm.

cused highlights to create luminous images — Notarile describes the look as "a slide held up to a light." The cinematographer uses extensive filtration on the lens, a choice he made after he and Bochner conducted some experiments together. He explains, "There are two schools of thought about shooting digitally: use no filters while you're capturing and create all your looks in color correction; or play with filtration during the origination, knowing that you're not capturing 100-percent raw data." After doing side-by-side tests, the two settled on an approach in which Notarile uses some filtration, but pulls back a little from where he would go if he were working on film. "I steer [the colorist] by using a filter, and then he crosses the finish line," says the cinematographer. "But because the Viper captures more data much more sharply, I wasn't afraid to use filtration. I would have been more hesitant if I'd been shooting with the Sony F900."

Doering-Powell, on the other hand, has tended to shoot clean, aside from an occasional Soft/FX or ND. He has sometimes used a 50 CCM (color-compensation magenta) filter, which, when combined with the Viper's Thru color-filtration setting (no white balance applied), produces a cleaner signal-to-noise ratio. "The Viper's signal is clean to begin with, but with the 50CCM your red and blue noise floors are somewhat lower," he explains. "However, it isn't always possible to shoot in this mode because you lose a stop with the filter." He also has found that the camera requires a little more color on the lights. "For example, if you'd use a ½ CTO gel when shooting film, you'd use a Full CTO to get the same warming effect [with the Viper]."

Bochner says a number of people impressed by both shows' imagery have questioned him about the Viper and his color-correction process. "The buzz is getting out there," he says. ■







New Products & Services



Above: The three-axis, gyro-stabilized Klaus Cam is suspended from a helicopter via a cable, thus removing many of the typical limitations caused by the aircraft. Below: Klaus Obermeyer.

Klaus Cam Aerial System
by Stephanie Argy

The Klaus Cam, an aerial camera rig designed by Klaus Obermeyer of Aéro Film and Scott Howell of CineMoves, is a three-axis, gyro-stabilized head that hangs on a cable below a helicopter, making it possible to fly a camera through tight and treacherous surroundings that would be dangerous or impossible to navigate with other types of rigs. Because the apparatus is suspended far beneath the transport helicopter, even the widest lenses can be used without risk that the camera will catch a glimpse of the aircraft above.

The inspiration for the Klaus Cam came in 2000, when Obermeyer and Howell went to Greenland to do a Chevrolet spot. "The Klaus Cam was a product of necessity — actually, a product of desperation!" recalls Howell. "We showed up in Greenland, and none of our equipment did." To make it possible to shoot dynamic footage of glaciers, Howell cobbled together a rig using a 2'x4' piece of wood, a 1,000' film can and a lot of duct tape.

"I was just happy to cover a desperate situation," says Howell. "But Klaus lives and dies by the idea that if a little is good, more is better, and he said, 'Let's do something different with this.'" Obermeyer's first thought was to take advantage of Howell's rig to fly some super-wide lenses. "There are aerial [situations] where you can't use a 12mm or 10mm, let alone a 6mm or 8mm," says Howell. "We put a 6mm lens on there and got some of the most incredible shots, and from that moment on, it became part of our repertoire."

Since then, Obermeyer and Howell have continued to develop the rig, collaborating with pilot Craig Hoskings. Now a fully stabilized three-axis head, the rig is set up so that it's possible to remotely control a camera's focus, aperture and speed. "We can start very wide running at 2-3 fps and then ramp up," says Obermeyer. They've flown a variety of cameras on the rig, but they have mainly used the Arri 435 and Arri 35-3.



The cable that holds the Klaus Cam can be lengthened or shortened, depending on the project. "We've done everything from 30 to 150 feet," says Obermeyer. "You might want a longer cable to get the rotor wash or noise farther away from the camera, or you might want a shorter cable to get finer control."

Because so many of the jobs Obermeyer and Howell do are logistically challenging, an important goal was to make a system that could travel easily and not need a lot of support. "I've seen so many products out of Hollywood that try to go too sophisticated," notes Howell. "We kept this super-simple, super-rugged. We spend a lot of time in the Alps and Switzerland; you're not going to get a big grip truck in there, so you have to be very 'commando-ready.' I can travel with the entire rig in three decent-sized Pelican cases."

For Howell, some of the most interesting uses of the Klaus Cam have been those that appear simple. When a car is driving on a dry lakebed, for example, the camera-car method would kick up a cloud of dust and obscure the picture vehicle. But with the Klaus Cam, a clean shot from in front of and looking back toward the car can be attained. It's possible to lower the camera from a helicopter and keep it right in front of the car as it drives, and because the helicopter is so high above, dust isn't kicked up. "It's a simple frontal shot, but you haven't seen it in that environment," says Howell.

Obermeyer says the impetus for the ongoing development of the Klaus Cam will come from the jobs people bring them, and he's hoping for productions that will enable him to really push the system. He and Howell have experimented with an amphibious version of the rig, which would make it possible to

do shots in which the camera starts deep under water, then climbs into the sky. "We've only touched on this rig's potential," says Obermeyer. "We're just looking for great excuses to do something revolutionary with it."

For more information, contact Lance O'Connor at Aero Film, (310) 396-3636 or visit www.aerofilm.tv.

RAID-ing Storage

by Jay Holben

Last month, while reviewing Final Cut Pro HD 5.0, I had the opportunity to work with the new Medéa VideoRaid FCR2X Fibre Channel RAID array. I am often technologically befuddled by ATAs, SATAs and SCSIs, and I'm still wondering exactly what a parallel port is parallel to, so I had a great deal to learn while evaluating the Medéa FCR2X array.

Even though my documentary project required 2.5TB of storage to complete the edit, my executive producers and I elected not to go with RAID storage. Instead, we went with a collection of external 7200 RPM (ATA-100) hard drives, five 400GB, one 300GB, and one 200GB. Five of the drives were connected to the Mac G5 via FireWire800 (IEEE 1394b), and the last two were connected via FireWire400 (IEEE 1394a). Two of the 400GB drives were "daisy-chained" together, as were the final two drives (300GB and 200GB).

This rather convoluted scenario was dictated by economics. We spent just over $2,500 for 2.5TB. A RAID array of the same size runs 3x or 4x higher than that, and adding a RAID controller card to the computer necessitates an additional expense. With our setup in mind, I was excited to have an opportunity to compare the more expensive RAID array to my formidable collection of external drives.

Although it might seem difficult to evaluate a hard drive — it either works or it doesn't — I discovered I could not rely on the Seagate 300GB external drive I used on my project, because it would "go to sleep" if I didn't access it every five minutes or so. Then

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it would take up to 30 seconds to spin up and read or write data. With video footage in a timeline, this meant that whenever I came to a clip from the Seagate and the drive was "asleep," it stopped the playback dead in its tracks.

To evaluate uncompressed 10-bit 1920x1080i 23.98psf footage for the Final Cut review, my main FireWire drives (Hitachi Deskstar 400GB ATA/IDE 7200 RPM in Macpower Tytech IceCube 800+ FireWire enclosures, built by Melrose Mac in Los Angeles) simply weren't fast enough to properly play back the high-resolution footage. FireWire400 (IEEE 1394a) is capable of up to 400 Megabits-per-second data transfer. FireWire800 (IEEE 1394b) is capable of up to 800 Megabits-per-second data transfer. There is an important distinction between Megabits per second (expressed Mbps) and Megabytes per second (expressed MBps): one byte is eight bits, so a FireWire400 connection is capable of up to 400Mbps but only 50MBps. As a rule, the computer industry converts Mbps to MBps using a factor of 10, so a FireWire400 connection is presented as 40MBps.

These numbers can certainly be confusing. The data rate numbers of various video formats also vary depending on whom you ask. One source notes DV video at a data rate of 30.1Mbps (3.76MBps), while another states DV at 25Mbps (3.125MBps), and yet another puts DV at 28.8Mbps (3.6MBps). When I'm faced with inconsistencies like that, I usually take the "worst-case scenario" and consider that my answer. Because the Hitachi Deskstar drives are ATA-100 and capable of up to 100Mbps (12.5MBps), they work wonderfully for DV, which only needs 30Mbps (3.76MBps), but when you introduce uncompressed 10-bit 1920x1080 at about 1,064Mbps (133MBps), FireWire400 and 800 simply can't handle the data rates to capture and play back the hi-def footage properly.

Enter the RAID array. RAID offers much higher data-rate capabilities. For the Medéa FRC2X, those data rates can be up to 2,560 Mbps (320MBps). Ironically, when I pulled one of the 10 hard drives from the FRC2X, I found it was almost exactly the same drive I was using in my FireWire enclosures! The drive inside was a Hitachi Deskstar 250GB 7200RPM ATA-100 drive. The only difference between the RAID drive and my own FireWire drive was that mine was a 400GB drive, and the RAID was only a 250GB. How, then, can the RAID be more than triple the speed of the single drive?

That's where the whole concept of RAID comes in. Redundant Array of Independent Disks is a collection of standard hard drives fitted into an individual housing with a RAID controller. There are two major benefits to the RAID configuration. One is that you achieve faster data-rate transfers by forcing the grouped drives to act as a single drive; this is what allows the Medéa array to offer sustained data rates of up to 320MBps (2,560Mbps), more than 25x the speed that the individual Hitachi Deskstar ATA-100 drives can produce alone. The second major benefit of a RAID array is that data is stored *redundantly* on the various disks. Although this reduces the overall storage capacity, it means that if one of the disks in the array fails, it can be replaced without data loss because the data is copied elsewhere on the array and can be seamlessly reassembled on the fly while editing continues.

There are several configurations of RAID systems (RAID Levels 0-5). RAID 0 incorporates no redundancy but groups a number of standard drives together to gain speed. RAID 3, the most common in postproduction, is an array of disk drives in which one disk is dedicated to "checking" the system integrity and data is distributed over the remaining drives in the array.

The Medéa VideoRaid FRC2X array includes a preventive-maintenance system called RAID Patrol, which monitors the disk media for errors. When it does become necessary to replace a drive, users can simply swap out the bad drive module without having to power down the system, and the array will automatically begin reconstruction of the drive in the background while the editor continues to work. It seemed a bit contrary to remove the drives from the *back* of the unit rather than the front. Although drive replacement should be a rare thing, why should I have to get *behind* the array to pull a drive?

The 1.6TB FCR2X array I worked with was filled with 10 250GB hard drives. Although this would mean 2.5TB of disk space, because of the RAID redundancy factor this is reduced to 1.6TB. It is, of course, a tradeoff made for security and peace of mind. These drives can be upgraded to get up to 3.2TB. The arrays are also scaleable and interconnectable to achieve storage capacities of up to 120TB, which translates to roughly 166 hours of uncompressed 1920x1080 10-bit video.

FCR2X features Medéa's proprietary Multi-Stream Technology (MST), a sophisticated, embedded, stream-handling algorithm that works in conjunction with the system's onboard caching RAID controller to support simultaneous real-time playback of multiple streams of uncompressed standard-def video. However, this is a feature I was not equipped to evaluate.

Each half of the FCR2X has a built-in 4-port Fibre Channel hub that allows for direct connection of up to four workstations so the array can be simultaneously accessed by up to four operators working with the same data. It is designed to integrate with a variety of capture cards from Blackmagic Design, AJA Video Systems, NewTek and Pinnacle Systems, as well as provide support for editing up to eight streams of uncompressed standard-def video or a single stream of uncompressed hi-def video on complete systems such as

Avid's Adrenaline.

The array is rack-mountable (3U), but I would certainly want it out of the edit bay because of significant noise and light factors. The array's excessively loud fan (cooling 10 hard drives takes the wind power of a small jet engine) is annoying, and the obnoxiously bright blue LED lights along the face of the array are extremely distracting. However, with the fiber-optic cabling option, the array can be placed up to 300 meters from your workstation, completely eliminating these concerns from the equation.

A listed feature is that the drive provides redundant power supplies (two power cables, one to each half of the array) to provide further security against lost editing time in the event of a power failure, but this would mean that each half of the array would have to be powered through a different circuit, and I don't see that as a typical installation. Perhaps the feature is intended to protect against *internal* power failure, but this would seem to be an incredibly unlikely occurrence.

For my applications, the drive performed beautifully. It was easy to configure, was immediately recognized by the Mac G5, and wrote and read information flawlessly. There were no dropped frames, no delays and no error messages. Although the cost of the VideoRaid ($7,799) is 4x higher than the cost of my 2.5TB of external drives (not including a $500-$2,000 Fibre Channel controller card in the computer), there was no ridiculous mess of cables. (My current system has seven power cables and seven FireWire cables; the FRC2X has two power cables and two data cables.)

Also, the extra money gets you more than 25x the data rate possible with individual drives, RAID redundancy data protection, multi-workstation connectivity and large scalability that simply cannot be achieved with individual external drives.

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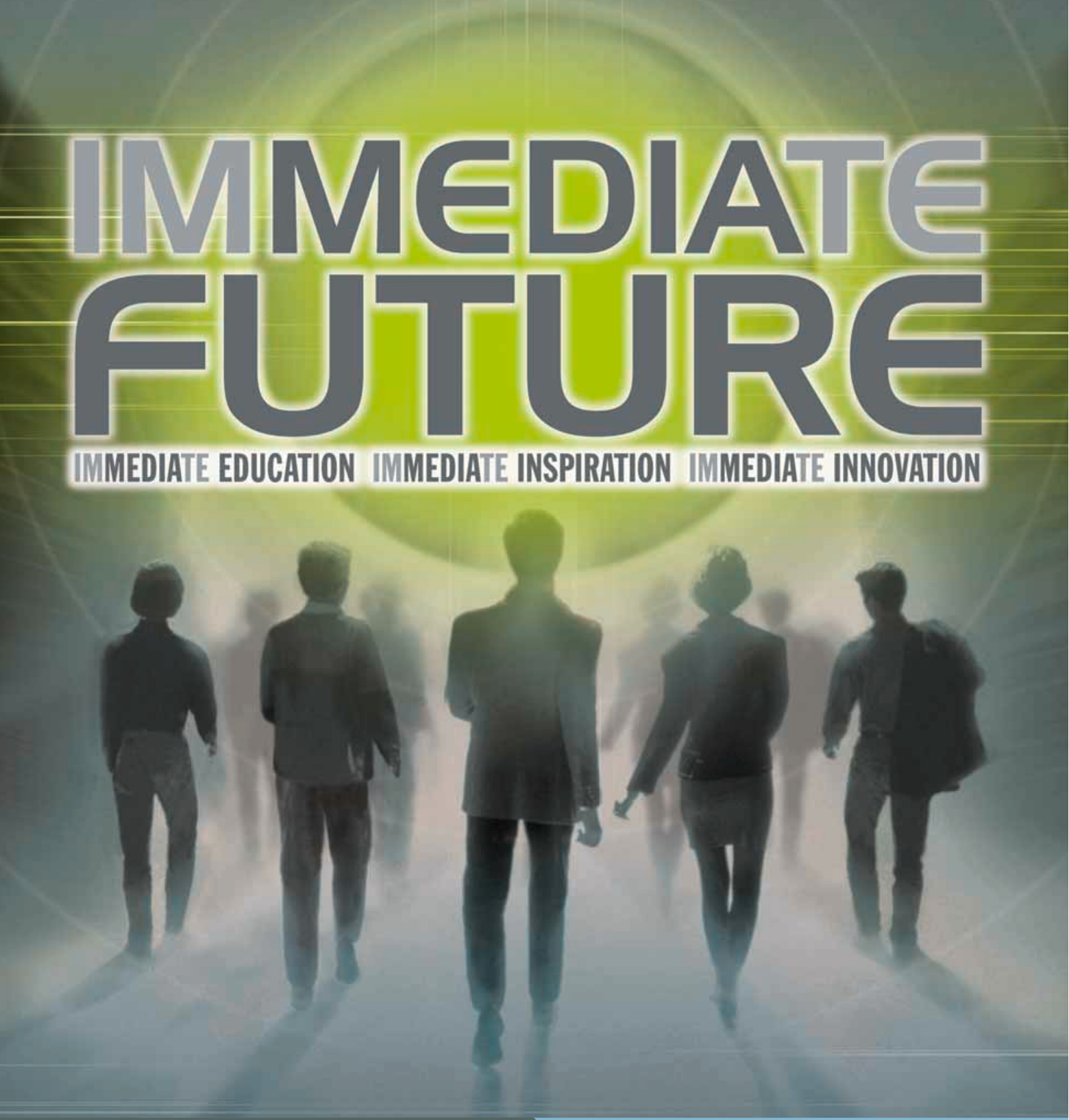
HD Expo will serve as creator and producer of an interactive DVD featuring commercials that have been acquired on the Panasonic VariCam HD Cinema camera. The DVD will be an invaluable resource for advertising agencies making the transition to HD and seeking examples to demonstrate the capabilities of high definition and the VariCam camera.

The DVD will contain the advertising categories of automotive, tabletop and fashion, and will include interviews with many of the directors of photography. In addition, it will include a reference guide to rental facilities and resellers of the VariCam in the U.S., providing creative directors with contact information for the ad agency, production company, director and director of photography for each spot selected for the DVD resource guide. The DVD will be distributed in the spring of 2006.

"With HD Production expanding rapidly, we're confident that the advertising community will join this revolution," says Kristin Petrovich, CEO and founder of HD Expo, which is producing the DVD in partnership with its marketing wing, KMP & Associates. "This DVD will give examples of high-end commercials that were shot on the VariCam to show agencies and production companies the quality and efficiencies available in high definition."

HD Expo has announced an international call for submissions, with awards sponsored by Panasonic for the following categories: Most Creative, Most Stylized and Best Experimental. Additional sponsors of the DVD and awards are being sought. Judging of the spots will be done by industry notables in the advertising and entertainment fields, and the winners will be announced in the summer of 2006.

In addition to the awards, HD Expo, Panasonic and participating sponsors plan to host an event showcasing the winning and runners-up commercials. For submissions, contact Kristin Petrovich, (818) 842-6611, E-mail: submissions@hdexpo.net, Web site: www.hdexpo.net. ■



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Above: In an abandoned orphanage, Brenda (Julianne Moore) contemplates the whereabouts of her missing child in *Freedomland*, shot by Anastas Michos, ASC. Right: Police officer Lorenzo Council (Samuel L. Jackson) investigates Brenda's case.

Freedomland, a racially charged story adapted by Richard Price from his own novel, is, like its source, set in New Jersey. But, says director of photography Anastas Michos, ASC, "We shot not one whit of footage in Jersey." In and of itself, this is not unusual, but what is surprising is where the movie was actually shot: entirely in New York. "We were in the interesting position of using our five boroughs to emulate New Jersey," says Michos. "Usually what you face is making Toronto look like Manhattan!" *Freedomland* is one of the first feature productions to take advantage of the "Made in NY" state and city tax incentives, which were introduced at the beginning of 2005.

Michos notes that specificity of setting is not so important to the film, a thriller inspired by several actual incidents. *Freedomland* tells the story of a woman (Julianne Moore) who claims she has been carjacked by a black man, and that her child was in the car. "The thrust of the picture, and the thrust of the cinematography, was to make it look like any urban area in America," says Michos. "So ultimately, these characters could live next door to any audience member — it could be Chicago or Detroit. When you shoot in Manhattan, you're so often trying to make the city look iconic, but we were going the other way."

Actually, most of *Freedomland* was shot in the city's outer boroughs, especially the Bronx, Queens and Staten Island. "It was a very short schedule, 39 days, and we were moving quickly," Michos says. "It was all location except for a couple of apartments that were built onstage." The setting for about half the film is a housing project where Moore's character is found wandering around in a daze. Samuel L. Jackson plays a housing police officer who interrogates her and tries to get to the bottom of her inconsistent story.

Unfolding over three days, *Freedomland*, like many thrillers, takes place largely at night, "where people hide in the dark, and when your fears come out," says Michos, who adds that his intention was to balance realism and stylization. "All of Richard Price's screenplays and books have a feel of real people doing real things, which is why they're compelling. That was part of [my work], trying to find a style to put that across. On the other hand, it's a very wordy script; although it's a whodunit, it's certainly not an action 'whodunit,' and that meant we had to keep our scenes compelling enough to keep audiences listening. We tried to match the intensity of the written word with the image."

Michos came up with various shooting strategies for the film's lengthy interrogation scenes, for example. "There's one scene with Julianne and Sam locked in a room, and it's a four-minute handheld scene," he says. "Our mandate was to match the emotion [the actors] had going, so I lit it in a very high-key way and told my camera operator, Danny Moder, to just go wild and get the coverage." A different, 3½-minute scene between Moore and Edie Falco was done in one shot, with the camera doing a

Photos by Frank Masi, SMPSP, courtesy of Revolution Studios Distribution Company, LLC.

"slight, slow drift in — our dolly grip, Red Burke, called it 'The Bataan Death March dolly move.' I set up another camera on a different angle to give [director] Joe Roth the option of doing something else, but when I went in to time the picture, there it was, a one-shot deal."

Michos filmed *Freedomland* in Super 35mm 2.35:1 with two Panaflex Platinums and Primo lenses. "Most directors of photography are stretching our abilities and sights on each picture, and we want to have something that's familiar," he says. "I use Panavision because that's what I've always used; I know what the equipment is, and I know what their lenses do. We tended to use the long end and the wide end; it was a picture on a 21mm or 27mm, or a 75mm or 150mm. I don't think we pulled out the 50mm, 40mm, or 35mm very often. It's a story of extremes and seemed to call for it."

The cinematographer always had two cameras rolling. "The lighting side of me thought I'd lost my mind, because invariably there's something compromised about the [lighting for the] second camera. The other side of me recognized this was a very performance-driven picture, and the coverage needed to be fresh. It's such an emotionally draining picture that I didn't want the actors to go through something seven times." Michos also resisted the temptation to operate, even though he was a sought-after Steadicam operator before making the switch to director of photography with the 1997 feature *The Education of Little Tree*. (His cinematography credits also include *Man on the Moon*, *Mona Lisa Smile* and *The Forgotten*.)

"As an operator," he says, "I was always pleased that I was the guy who saw the images first. The rest of the film process literally melted away when my eye was to the eyepiece. As a director of photography, I need to give more attention to shots down the line, to the overall look of the film and the schedule. I would love to do a film where I operate and manage to also take care of the 'paperwork,' but I haven't yet found a way to do that." He adds that camera movement is used sparingly in *Freedomland*, exploding into activity at key moments. "It's a film that gives up its clues reluctantly. We wanted to punctuate certain moments with violent camera movement, either handheld or Steadicam."



Jackson, director Joe Roth and Michos review a take. Below: Michos previews a shot.

Michos shot day exteriors on Kodak Vision 320T 5277 and all other material on Vision2 500T 5218. Going to a digital intermediate [DI] at EFilm in Hollywood meant he could "leave some of the choices for later," including changing one day scene to dusk. "The DI allows me to selectively shade the frame and give it nuances that would certainly take much more time to achieve on set," he says.

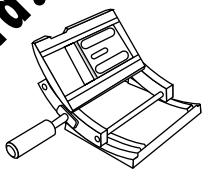
Though the majority of *Freedomland* takes place at night, one notably dark sequence, set in the abandoned orphanage that gives the film its title, actually unfolds during the day. "On a daytime search for the missing child, the characters come across this building," says Michos, who adds that the sequence was shot at the New York Farm Colony on Staten Island. "It's a decisive moment for Julianne's character, and the building is in a way a metaphor for her state of mind. I wanted to make sure it was dark inside. The building's windows were boarded up with slats, and streaks of light coming from outside were the motivation to see our actors. Joe kept saying, 'Make it darker.' That's a conundrum in most films: how do you portray darkness when you're supposed to see the scene?

"As I said, it's a movie of extremes," he concludes. "The trick was to give it a sense of heightened reality, to try to underscore the dialogue and drama without going over the top. We wanted to keep it in the realm of real people being affected by real situations." ■



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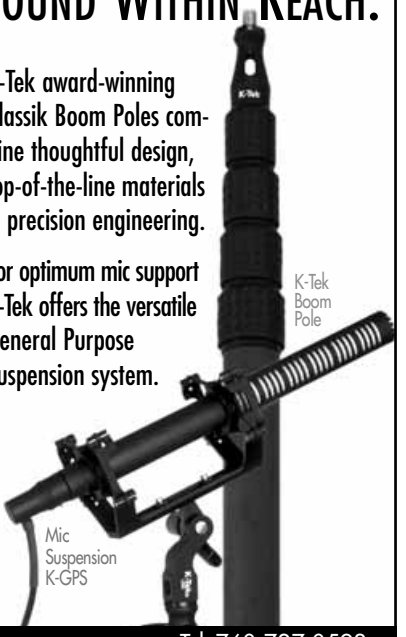
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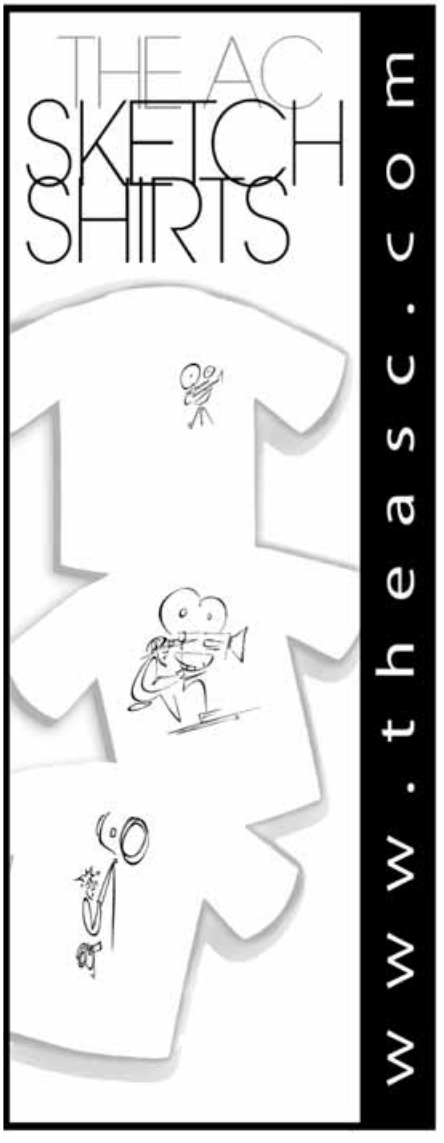
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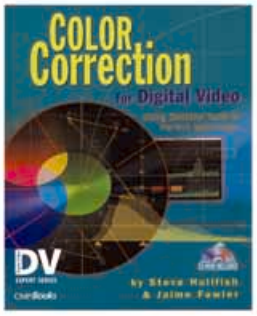


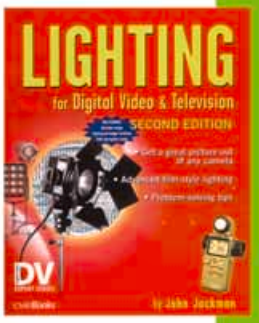
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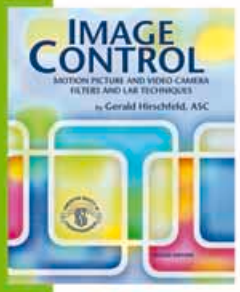
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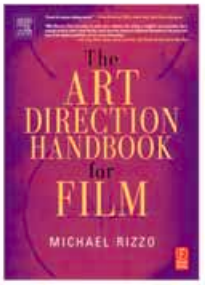
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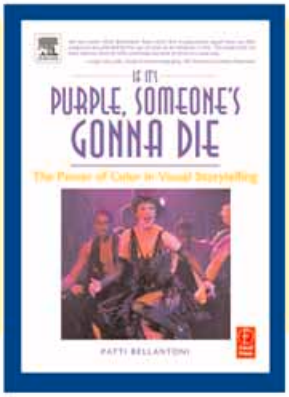






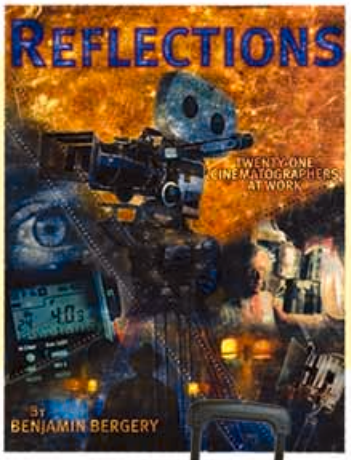


















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Clubhouse News





Taylor to Receive International Award

Gilbert Taylor, BSC will receive the ASC's International Award at the 20th Annual ASC Outstanding Achievement Awards on February 26, 2006. Upon learning of the award, which is presented annually to a cinematographer whose main body of work was created outside of the United States, Taylor declared, "This recognition is more important to me than an Oscar or any other award I can think of, because it comes from my peers. So many excellent cameramen have received it. I am honored to be included among them."

In his announcement, ASC Awards Committee chairman **Russ Alsobrook** praised Taylor's work, which "made an indelible impression on audiences. He expanded the vocabulary of visual storytelling and inspired many cinematographers to explore new ideas." **Richard Crudo, ASC** adds, "Gil Taylor was an amazingly versatile cinematographer. He worked in black-and-white and color and in virtually every genre, from science fiction to humor, drama and fright films. His approach to cinematography was original and artful and has stood the test of time."

Taylor began his career in 1929 at the age of 15, when he landed a job as a camera assistant. After serving in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserves for six years during World War II, he earned his first narrative credit as director of photography *Journey Together* (1946). He subsequently compiled more than 60 feature credits, including *Dr. Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, *A Hard Day's Night*, *The Omen* and *Star Wars*.

Irola Named USC Cinematography Chair

Judy Irola, ASC, was recently named the Conrad Hall Endowed Chair in Cinematography and Color Timing at the University of Southern California School of Cinema-Television. USC alumni Steven Spielberg and George Lucas endowed the chair, emphasizing the importance of color timing in the cinematography curriculum. Representing Spielberg and Lucas at the event, **Woody Omens, ASC** noted, "The rapid evolution of digital-intermediate technology is now expanding the role that cinematographers play deep into post-production. Steven Spielberg and George Lucas appreciate the importance of preparing the next generation of filmmakers for this transition, because it affects directors, cinematographers and everyone else involved in the collaborative process."

Irola's career as a cinematographer began in the early 1970s, when she worked on PBS documentaries and local news in San Francisco, where she also co-founded the film collective Cine Manifest. Relocating to New York City in 1977, she continued compiling nonfiction credits, and in 1979, she won the Camera d'Or Award at Cannes for her first narrative feature, *Northern Lights*. Irola returned to California in 1989, and three years later she joined the faculty at USC. She joined the ASC in 1995, and four years later she became a tenured associate professor at USC.

A Fistful of Cinematographers

The ASC recently partnered with the Autry National Center to present the seminar "Sergio Leone's Influence on Westerns and Beyond," which examined Leone's influence on the art of cinematography. ASC members **Russ Alsobrook**, **James A. Chressanthis**, **George Spiro Dibie**, **Michael Goi**, **Jack Green, Levie Isaacks, Richard H. Kline**, **Isidore Mankofsky**, **Owen Roizman, Allen Daviau** and **Kees Van Oostrum** filled out the panel, and ASC honorary member **Bob Fisher** moderated the discussion. Panelists screened clips from Leone pictures that have been influential in their own work, and the session ended with an audience Q&A. (See photos on opposite page.)

ASC Members Drive HD Expo Panels

The Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles recently played host to the HD Expo. Several ASC members and associate members participated in the event's educational panels, all of which boasted standing-room-only crowds. Cinematographer Paul Cameron joined ASC members **Bill Bennett, Allen Daviau** and **Wally Pfister** to discuss the increasingly competitive world of television commercials on the panel "The Art of 30 Second Story-Telling." Later in the day, associate member **Leon Silverman**, president of LaserPacific, led a discussion of the DI process, and Daviau returned to speculate on future technologies in "HD and Beyond."

For more information, visit www.hdexpo.net. ■

— Jon Witmer

Photos by Jared Jordan.











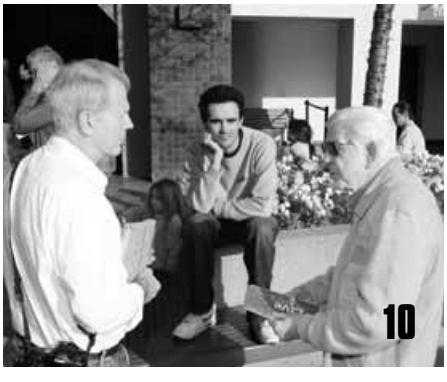




1. Back row (left to right): Kees Van Oostrum, Michael Goi, Isidore Mankofsky, James Chressanthis. Front row: Allen Daviau, Bob Fisher, Richard Kline, George Spiro Dibie, Richard Crudo and Levie Isaacks. 2. The venue. 3. Fisher, Daviau and Dibie. 4. Ricco Ricardo Clement and Mankofsky. 5. Owen Roizman. 6. Goi. 7. Goi, Daviau and actor Robert Davi. 8. Chressanthis and Dibie. 9. Jack Green. 10. Listening to two masters: Francis Kenny (left) and Ralph Woolsey (right).







ASC CLOSE-UP

John Simmons, ASC



When you were a child, what film made the strongest impression on you?
When I was about 7, my father brought home a 16mm projector and a box of films. The films were black-and-white documentaries about faraway places — India, Africa and the Grand Canyon, far away from Chicago. I learned how to work the projector, and my friends and I would screen them in my basement. I can remember how much those films would move my imagination. I'd drive my friends crazy wanting to watch those things over and over.

Which cinematographers, past or present, do you most admire?
There are so many great cinematographers I admire, especially [ASC members] Gregg Toland, Conrad Hall and Jordan Cronenweth. I particularly admire James Wong Howe, ASC, not only because of his brilliant work but also because of his ability to excel in an environment that presented challenges, especially racial barriers, that he had to transcend. I can relate to that. Presently, there are so many wonderful cinematographers whom I respect and admire that I can't name them all without leaving some truly important ones out.

What sparked your interest in photography?
When I was 15, I was given a book called *The Sweet Flypaper of Life* by Roy DeCarava. The photography in that book found me and showed me what I wanted to do. I started taking pictures that same year.

Where did you train and/or study?
Bobby Sengstacke, who documented the civil-rights era, taught me photography/processing/printing. He put me to work at the *Chicago Defender* newspaper and exposed me to Henri Cartier Bresson, Gordon Parks, Walker Evans and many others. He helped me to see my direction. I studied fine art and painting at Fisk University and I attended film school at the University of Southern California.

Who were your early teachers or mentors?
My greatest mentor was writer/director Carlton Moss, who came to Fisk University once a month to teach a film class. He looked at one of my Super 8 films and said, 'Simmons, you're a cinematographer.' He sent me a 16mm camera from his friend Cal Bernstein at Dove Films and gave me film. I messed up a lot of film! Carlton's friend, Stu Hiesler, helped me understand the elements of drama, and at Wexler Films I met Sin Hock Gaw, who trained me as a camera assistant. Woody Omens, ASC was my most influential teacher at USC. I owe so much to all of these people.

What are some of your key artistic influences?
I am a painter, and I love studying paintings. It's such a wonderful way to learn about light and shadow, as well as the artistic license taken by artists.

How did you get your first break in the business?
My first job shooting was with Carlton Moss. He directed and produced a series of biographical documentaries on the lives of famous African Americans. We were a two-man crew, and we shot all over the country.

What has been your most satisfying moment on a project?
Tim Reid gave me my first feature, a coming-of-age period piece called *Once Upon A Time When We Were Colored*. He looked at my music-video reel and gave me a chance. That was a giant step for me. We studied paintings and photographs from the WPA and re-created a look that I'm still pleased with.

Have you made any memorable blunders?
I'm a tough critic on myself. I've made many blunders and have gotten away with them. I just try not to make them twice — unless they're really good ones.

What's the best professional advice you've ever received?
Lose the word 'can't' from your vocabulary. Carlton Moss taught me there is always a way to get it done.

What recent books, films or artworks have inspired you?
I enjoy watching music videos because they're always on the cutting edge. I also shoot lots of stills and am constantly inspired by photography.

Do you have any favorite genres, or genres you would like to try?
I would like to make an action film or a musical.

If you weren't a cinematographer, what might you be doing instead?
Painting.

Which ASC members recommended you for membership?
Judy Irola, Bill Dill and Isidore Mankofsky.

How has ASC membership impacted your life and career?
Cinematography is a journey. It's always in a constant state of becoming, and there is nothing static about it. The choices I've made in the past have put me where I am. All along the way, I've wondered whether I should have done this or done that — we do what's most important at the time. Becoming a member of the ASC was the most important moment of my career. To be embraced as a peer by the most incredible cinematographers in the world has given significance to every moment I've spent behind the camera. It is a point of arrival and departure. I've become a part of history in a way I never thought would happen. Joining the ASC is a dream come true for any cinematographer. ■



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